



THE TIMES

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Cabinet tries to calm fears on GM food

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

FIVE Cabinet ministers joined forces last night in an unprecedented offensive to meet public concern over genetically modified food and crops.

After a week on the back foot and government confusion, John Prescott and his four Cabinet colleagues most involved in the controversy over so-called Frankenstein foods wrote to every MP in an attempt to calm the outbreak of public and media concern.

They promised that their first responsibility as ministers was to protect consumers and the environment. They insisted that public health was their first priority.

In a letter issued by Downing Street, they gave a clear pledge to ban the cultivation in Britain of any GM crops that are shown to have a damaging impact on the environment. The letter contained no outright change of policy, but it marked a big change of tone in the Government's response after days of accusing the press of exaggerating the issue.

The five-page letter, signed also by Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary; Nick Brown, the Agriculture Minister; Stephen Byers, the Trade Secretary; and Jack Cunningham, the Cabinet Office "Enforcer", was graphic evidence that the media and public outcry over the foods has shaken the Government.

The ministers voiced confidence that GM products now on sale were safe, said that no new products would be allowed onto the market until rigorous safety checks had been carried out and promised to oppose approval of foods at European Union level if any British safety assessments raised doubts about a product.

After indications during recent days that ministers are increasingly unlikely to allow the planting of GM crops in the near future, the ministers emphasised that there would

be no commercial planting unless the evidence of trials showed there would be no adverse impact.

It said that "limited and monitored" commercial planting "might" take place next year. There was a four-year programme of trials and the case for commercial planting would be considered each year based on available evidence.

The letter was designed both to reassure the public and to underline the scientific case for genetic modification, which could help to produce more nutritious and tastier food and enable the development of crops that benefit the environment because fewer pesticides would be needed to enable them to thrive.

"Throughout history," the ministers said, "scientific advances have raised new fears. Some of these have proved irrational, others have proved well judged. The Government's first priorities are to protect people and the environment. But we must do so in ways that do not deny to our people the healthcare, environmental, economic and other benefits that flow from technological advances."

It added: "That would be an abdication of the responsibility placed on us."

The letter to MPs of all parties was accompanied by a 50-page factfile about the development of GM foods.

The letter came after environmental activists launched new protests. Greenpeace campaigners dumped four tonnes of soya beans outside Downing Street in protest at Tony Blair's support for GM foods.

In Liverpool, police arrested six Greenpeace activists who had entered Seaford grain

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Handcuffs as Kurds end siege

By ADRIAN LEE
AND RICHARD DUKE

THE occupation of the Greek Embassy in London ended peacefully yesterday, after almost 60 hours, when 77 Kurdish demonstrators gave themselves up to police.

There was a last minute hitch over the terms of surrender but, with firemen standing by in case protesters carried out threats to burn themselves, the end came just after 2pm.

Babis Patsouris, an embassy clerk who had been held hostage, was the first to emerge. As the protesters were searched, some handcuffed, and led away, they gave victory signs and chanted: "long live our leader".

Mr Patsouris, who was unharmed, shook hands with one of his captors before being reunited with Greek Embassy staff and his family.

Last night 73 men and four

women were being questioned at two police stations where they were held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The end to the siege was delayed for an hour after police refused demands that the occupiers would not face charges. Following their arrest, several hundred supporters outside the embassy said they would not leave.

Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, gave details of the operation, which began in the early hours of Tuesday when the front door of the embassy, in Holland Park, West London, was smashed.

He said that during negotiations no deals were done: "They knew they were going to be arrested and they were arrested." Sir Paul said police had been placed on alert for further Kurdish protests.

"At times it was very tense and dangerous but we were very pleased it came to a conclusion safely and peacefully. We were able to reassure them about their treatment. We have honoured that promise."

The embassy was being checked for damage and weapons. Although police said there was no evidence that the occupiers were armed, they

were seen holding what appeared to be fire bombs and it was feared that the embassy may have been doused with petrol.

Yesterday, it became clear from early morning that a breakthrough was near. Speaking by telephone from inside the modern building, the protesters said that they were prepared to leave. They were said to be satisfied that the British Government would seek reassurances about the treatment of Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader, whose capture triggered the occupation. But it is believed that demands by the occupiers that they be allowed to hold a press conference were refused.

Lord Rea and the Labour MP Ann Clwyd, members of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, were brought to the embassy.

Babis Patsouris: shook hands with his captor

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TV Countdown's guilty secret is out at last

By CAROL MIDGLEY
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

COUNTDOWN, the gentle quiz programme beloved by Scrabble addicts and crossword fans, was forced to own up to a guilty secret last night.

Celebrity guests who sit in "dictionary corner" of Channel 4's longest running show are not quite as clever as they seem. Thanks to a tiny earpiece they are prompted by experts if they have trouble solving a particular conundrum.

Regular faces like Gyles Brandreth, Stephen Fry and Jo Brand, who are challenged to beat the contestants, have the luxury of being guided by Mark Nyman, the co-producer, a former world Scrabble champion.

The news may come as a surprise to fans of Countdown which has become a cult programme after 17 years, largely thanks to its cosy presenters Richard Whiteley and Carol Vorderman. The secret was revealed by The Times columnist



"You've been watching Countdown again, haven't you?"

Death certificates get brighter look

By ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

AN IMPROVED — and decidedly more cheerful — design for English and Welsh birth and death certificates has been produced by the Office of National Statistics.

Out go the sombre grey/black background of death certificates and the rose tint of birth certificates. Replacing them will be a pastel blue background with a central design incorporating the rose and daffodil emblems of England and Wales.

Register offices will begin to issue the certificates from late spring onwards, but those issued centrally by the Office for National Statistics — usually to replace a lost document — will be in the new design only after existing stocks have been used up.

There have been minor changes to certificates in recent years, but the new look is the first major design since existing background tints were introduced 50 years ago.

The changes will be phased

in so that all birth, death and still-birth certificates issued from January 1, 2000 will be in the new design.

About four million certificates are issued each year, including those for such purposes as the study of genealogy and passport applications.

A government spokesman last night denied that the change was a New Labour ploy to put a more positive spin on even the darkest of occasions such as death.

"Actually, the Stationery Office started thinking about these changes in early 1997 under the last Government. It's just that it has taken rather a long time to sort it all out," he said.

He added that secret design elements would also make the certificates — which will now be issued in a standard A4 size — harder for would-be forgers to counterfeit.

The new certificates have been given a trial run in Bolton, Lancashire.

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needed in the wake of the Lawrence inquiry. Mr Blair delivered an astonishing sidewipe to his colleagues and Sir Paul in particular.

He said the service's response to Sir William's report into the police handling of the Lawrence murder should at the least show "some real humility".

Mr Blair's speech, in which he compared the 43 police forces to a sleeping industrial giant living on its laurels, was seen by observers as an application for the job of Metropolitan Commissioner. He presented himself as the man with the vision and drive to head the service in the early years of the 21st century and as an officer who was "comfortable" with the criminal justice policies pursued by the Government.

But Mr Blair said that although race would be a key issue after the publication of the Macpherson report, there were other challenges facing the service whose working culture was out of date. "This is not about race, solely. It is about the mindset of the organisation."

One plan would be to allow the Commission for Racial Equality to conduct formal investigations into police operations. This change would make it unlawful for the police to discriminate on racial grounds. People would also be allowed to sue chief constables and police authorities for alleged racism.

Yesterday the prospect of sweeping change was welcomed by one of the youngest chief constables in the country who put down a marker to succeed Sir Paul Condon as Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

Ian Blair, 45, chief constable of Surrey, gave his colleagues a warning that the police service was facing the most sweeping challenge to outdated working methods and attitudes in 25 years. Setting out an ambitious plan for change



Ian Blair: compared police to a sleeping giant



Their Lordships find erogenous zones in unlikely places

Maps of the human body have been made, magnifying erogenous zones and telescoping the rest. Our skin surface is charted with area proportionate to the number of nerve endings. The picture is weird: lips, lobes, nipples and fingers swollen; legs and stomachs shrunk.

Each of us views the world outside in a comparably distorted way. Our map enlarges places where the nerve endings of our amicability cluster. Some *Times* readers

would have London's West End covering half the map, with Watford near the top. For some, Scottish readers, Hadrian's Wall would appear near the bottom.

Assemblies, too, offer their maps of the modern world. For the past two days this sketch has migrated to the Lords. They see things differently there.

Take Wednesday. This featured a Private Notice Question on Gibraltar. Ministers (represented by the Baroness Symons) were sticking to the

Foreign Office's strikingly half-hearted line declining to condemn Spanish provocations there. But a rock which, to the Foreign Office, is an embarrassing little dot on the horizon, was huge to their lordships. From the number and agitation of their interventions, Spain was the irritating dot, a huddle of foreigners separating Great Britain from the most enormous rock, teeming with apes and patriots.

That part of the peers' world map that was not occupied by Gibraltar seemed to

be largely taken up by Otterburn. I had never heard of Otterburn, but this artillery firing range in the Northumberland National Park was as familiar to peers as Piccadilly Circus. One after another, grizzled barons struggled to their feet to denounce proposals that it might be closed. Viscount Slim was incandescent.

Lord Burnham was anxious. Lord Redesdale knew all about it. "My Lords, despite the bangs," protested the normally dry Lord Carver, a retired field marshal, "these areas are extremely suitable for the preservation of wildlife." There was a rumble of assent. "Does not the Army need this range?" spluttered Lord

Campbell of Croy, "in the same way that I was able to calibrate my 25-pounders in the Second World War before I took my battery abroad."

For a 90s' generation, to whom "taking your battery abroad" might refer to energising the kids' Playstation on a package holiday to Benidorm, the realisation that a firing range in Northumberland looked, to peers, bigger than Spain, may come as a shock. Otterburn is one of their erogenous zones. Barons love being scratched there. And if shoot-

ing makes their nerve-ends sing, so does hunting, fishing, and the countryside.

Yesterday hedgerows (for some of us just the narrow boundaries between fields) ran high, wide and deep through the Lords' imagination. Peers such as Lord Beaumont of Whitley, his beard a hedgerow in itself, spoke with passion on hawthorn and beech. I pictured an England in which (like those ancient maps where monster fish and wind-puffing cherubim elbow humdrum data aside) mere cit-

ies are all but obscured by hedges, grouse moors, cathedrals, village greens and Otterburn.

The night before, peers had

talked for three hours about the Separation of Powers.

Lord Goodhart: "My Lords

... the previous five speakers

have all been over the age of

80 and two of them over 90 -

the quality of their speeches is

a good reason for not impos-

ing a retiring age on Mem-

bers of your Lordships'

House.

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Michael heads for victory in Welsh contest

By PHILIP WEBSTER AND VALERIE ELLIOTT



Michael: believed to have won GMB vote

ALUN MICHAEL was last night heading for victory in the divisive battle to be leader of the Welsh Labour Party and become the party's candidate for First Secretary of Wales.

Mr Michael, the Blairite candidate who replaced Ron Davies after his resignation from the Cabinet, was set for a narrow win after securing the crucial vote of one of the biggest unions.

He was understood to have taken the vote of the GMB general union, which represents 6.3 per cent of the three-way electoral college that will determine the outcome of the leadership contest. Rhodri Morgan, his rival, had been hoping that GMB support would give him the edge in the contest. Yesterday he won the backing of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union.

The GMB vote will be declared today and the overall result tomorrow. With both camps refusing publicly to predict the outcome, it appeared that Mr Michael would win the trade unions' and MPs' sections of the college, with Mr Morgan finishing ahead in the members' section.

Mr Michael's campaign has been dogged by accusations that the Labour leadership in

London and Wales has had to resort to old-style tactics to overcome the populist Mr Morgan, with union leaderships deciding their votes without consulting their members.

However, the GMB is expected to emphasise today that its decision follows consultation with members at branch meetings.

If Mr Michael has won he will make an immediate gesture of reconciliation towards Mr Morgan in the hope that divisions can quickly be buried for the elections to the Welsh

assembly on May 6. The contest took another twist last night with confusion over the arrangements for counting ballot papers sent out to 25,000 party members. Kevin Brennan, campaign manager for Mr Morgan, asked the Labour Party's Millbank HQ to allow a scrutineer to witness the count and ensure that ballot papers had been properly received and counted. But last night it was still unclear whether the party hierarchy would accept the request.

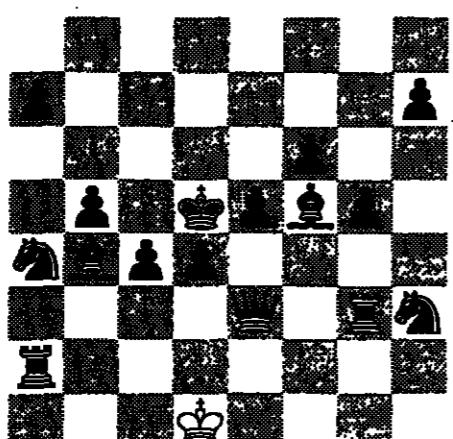
The handling of the postal ballot is contracted to Unity Security Ballotting, a subsidiary of the Unity Trust Bank. A spokesman at Unity Security declined to reveal details of the count or when and where ballot papers were opened before being counted because of its contract with Labour.

Party sources insisted that the company's system was scrupulously fair and followed strict rules. The count will take place electronically today when ballot papers are scanned into a machine. The process is to take place on machines owned by a pools company in Clerkenwell, London. The result will be declared in Cardiff Bay, home of the Welsh assembly.



Lord Porchester, heir to the Earl of Carnarvon, and Fiona Aitken, the fashion designer, after their wedding at the Savoy Hotel chapel in London, yesterday

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GM food protesters arrested on crane

By RUSSELL JENKINS

POLICE made ten arrests yesterday as they reclaimed a crane on the Liverpool dockside occupied by four Greenpeace activists protesting against imports of genetically modified food.

Four protesters climbed onto the crane at 3.40pm with enough equipment and provisions to stay there for several weeks, and unfurled a banner with the words "Ban gene foods". They were hoping to prevent ships unloading modified soya at Seaford Dock, but police ended their protest just before 7pm.

A convoy of Greenpeace vehicles, including four inflatable dinghies on trailers, was stopped overnight by Merseyside and Cheshire police on the M56 as they headed towards Liverpool. Several activists were questioned and the boats were impounded.

Peter Melchett, Greenpeace's executive director, said yesterday: "Genetically engineered soya is pouring into this country and Greenpeace is doing what Tony Blair ought to be doing - stopping it."

"There is an overwhelming public demand for natural and organic food. People should go to the Liverpool docks and support the people on the crane. This is an opportunity to show the strength of public support for our campaign."

A spokesman for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company said that six people were arrested as they tried to storm Seaford Dock. Four managed to evade capture and climb the crane superstructure.

A spokesman for Merseyside Police said: "Whilst recognising individual rights of peaceful protest, this action has been taken due to concerns in relation to the flow of shipping in and around the River Mersey as well as the safety of protesters, dock workers and members of the public."

They said that while English Nature wanted a minimum three-year period for the trials before any crops were commercially planted, "we believe our approach offers sufficient safeguards to ensure that large-scale plantings do not proceed until we have sufficient evidence that the particular crop does not harm the environment."

Sun flights keep lateness record

By JOANNA BALE

PASSENGERS on charter flights last summer suffered an average delay of 37 minutes, according to figures released yesterday. The largest increase was for Britain's biggest holiday airline, Britannia.

One in five of Britannia's planes was more than an hour late - nearly double its figure for summer 1997. Ian Hamer of the Air Transport Users' Council, which published the figures, said: "Of the large carriers, Air 2000 has recorded a significantly improved performance, but Britannia has slipped badly and we are looking to the carrier to recover its position in the coming year."

Generally, delays to charter flights in and out of main UK airports last summer were about the same as in summer 1997 despite a 7 per cent increase in flights. The council's statistics relate to charter flights from April to October 1998 at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Luton, Manchester and Newcastle. The average delay was 37.6 minutes compared with 37.5 minutes in summer 1997. 17.25 per cent of flights were more than an hour late, compared with 17.88 per cent in summer 1997.

Flying Colours topped the table, with only 5.33 per cent of its flights more than one hour late and with an average delay of 8.33 minutes. The worst performer was Air Europa with 30.79 per cent of flights more than an hour late and with an average delay of 57.54 minutes.

Air 2000 reduced its average delay from 39.12 minutes in summer 1997 to 27.57 minutes last summer.

Air Europa's average delay was 20.44 minutes.

Alitalia was 21.31 minutes.

Aer Lingus 21.86 minutes.

British Airways 22.27 minutes.

Malta International 24.72 minutes.

Scandinavian 25.15 minutes.

Swissair 25.82 minutes.

Turkish 26.70 minutes.

Source: Air Transport Users' Council

CHARTER DELAYS

AIRLINE BY % more late than last year RANK

AIRLINE	% more late than last year	RANK
Flying Colours	5.33	8.33
Alitalia	6.08	15.80
British Airways	7.45	19.44
Aer Lingus	9.20	25.00
Scandinavian	11.12	25.05
Air Europa	12.26	26.38
Monarch Airlines	14.15	32.07
Air 2000	14.47	27.57
European Air Charter	14.97	38.75
British Midland	17.36	36.74
Flying Colours	17.74	37.34
Edinburgh Airlines	19.50	44.03
Malta International	20.44	44.46
Always	21.31	47.29
Scandinavian	21.86	49.13
Aer Lingus	22.27	48.89
Malta International	24.72	49.89
Swissair	25.15	53.44
Swissair	25.82	55.20

Source: Air Transport Users' Council

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Move to the countryside, judge tells victim who 'feels blacks'

By SUSIE STEINER

AN ASIAN assault victim who developed a fear of black people was advised by a judge yesterday to move to the remote countryside to avoid meeting people of Afro-Caribbean origin.

After Mr Justice Rougier had awarded Mohibur Rahman £57,000 in damages, he suggested that he move to the Welsh Hills or return to his native Bangladesh to combat the "intense and wholly irrational dread" of black people which kept him imprisoned in his South London home.

The High Court judge based the award on Mr Rahman's pain and suffering from the assault, and for care and loss of earnings. But he refused any award in relation to the victim's phobia of black people.

"I've been painted a picture of a man cowering in his home, afraid to venture forth in fear of meeting black people. It's time for a little common sense to come into play," Judge Rougier told the court. "Of all the places he should not live, I suggest that South London tops the list.

"It is a multicultural city but it is not possible to go for a five-minute walk or enter a couple of shops without seeing people of Afro-Caribbean origin."

Judge Rougier said that there were still areas of the countryside which did not have substantial black communities, suggesting North Wales or Scotland to Mr Rahman.

"It's not as though it will be

tearing him from his roots, as they are in Bangladesh, and his enjoyment of London, if it can so be called, is confined to the four walls of his uncle's flat.

"I think it would be wholly unrealistic to expect Mr Rahman not to move. Remaining in London would amount to failure to take reasonable steps to ameliorate his painful condition. He owes it to his wife, who so recently swapped her bridal robes for a nurse's apron.

"He owes it to the next harmless West Indian he may assault in the street. But most of all, he owes it to himself."

Outside court, Mr Rahman's solicitor said that his client had found the judge's words "deeply offensive".

Mr Rahman has no intention of going to North Wales, said Sadig Khan. "It's unrealistic to expect him to uproot himself away from his family and community and live in rural England."

"Mr Rahman is British and finds it deeply offensive that it's suggested he go back to Bangladesh as a way of escaping black people."

Mr Rahman, 30, descended into psychotic paranoia four years ago after a vicious assault at the Central London burger bar where he worked as manager. Described as bright and sociable before the attack, he was set upon by two suspected drug dealers in March 1995. They splashed boiling oil on his legs and

stampeded on his face. As a result, Mr Rahman slumped into a severe depressive disorder which left him suicidal. His trauma was compounded when an operation on his right eye went wrong.

The judge said that Mr Rahman had been subjected to threats in the days leading up to the trial of one of his assailants and lived in dread of reprisals.

He had a tendency to misinterpret innocent actions and recently, while driving, tried to run down a black man walking along the pavement. He was unemployable, the court was told, and stayed in his flat in alternating states of listlessness and terror.

Mr Rahman was awarded more than £7,000 from his employers, Aearose Ltd, for his physical injuries. The company, which contested the claim, was ordered to pay a further £17,500 for loss of earnings and care.

University College London Hospitals NHS Trust, which admitted liability in relation to Mr Rahman's eye operation, was ordered to pay more than £5,000 in general damages and £30,000 for loss of earnings and care.

Mr Rahman was denied an additional £200,000 claimed by his solicitors to cope with his phobia of black people. Judge Rougier said: "It's another instance of where the constant need to increase damages has outstripped both reasonableness and reality."

This is not the first foray into controversy for Sir Richard Rougier, one of Britain's most senior judges. The 67-year-old member of the Gavel Club shocked a courtroom last year when he advised a 13-year-old alleged rape victim how to mix a Pimms. The teenager had just told a jury of her ordeal, describing how she got drunk on neat Pimms, when Judge Rougier embarked on his advice: "Take this from an experienced Pimms drinker like me if you want to drink well until you're older. But if you can't wait, dilute the drink with one part Pimms to six parts of lemonade at least," he told the schoolgirl.

In 1996 he made the headlines when he condemned "legal bureaucrats" who required 46 different documents before prosecuting a violent youth. The judge accused the Crown Prosecution Service of "paper lust".

After Jonathan Jones was convicted of killing his fiancée's parents, Harry and Megan Tooke, in South Wales, Mr Justice Rougier, the trial judge, wrote to the Home Secretary saying he was surprised by the jury's decision. Mr Jones was subsequently freed.

More recently, the judge has presided over several prominent cases including the dispute between the arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi and the Ritz Casino over a small matter of a £10 million gambling bill.

After Jonathan Jones was convicted of killing his fiancée's parents, Harry and Megan Tooke, in South Wales, Mr Justice Rougier, the trial judge, wrote to the Home Secretary saying he was surprised by the jury's decision. Mr Jones was subsequently freed.

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Father and son survive 3 nights in snow hole

A FATHER and his teenage son were recovering from severe frostbite and hypothermia yesterday after spending three days and nights sheltering in a tiny snow hole against blizzards in the Cairngorm mountains.

John Rawson, 44, from Manchester, and his son David, 16, had not been reported missing, and were rescued on Wednesday night only after their makeshift shelter was found by a party of climbers on a survival course. They were then flown to Raigmore Hospital in Inverness, where their hands and feet were bound with special bags to help thaw them out.

Mr Rawson, an experienced climber, had wanted to introduce his son to one of Britain's last wilderness areas, but on Sunday night, they suddenly found themselves trapped 4000ft above sea level on the plateau at Coire Domhain by 12mph winds and blizzards that reduced visibility to zero.

Speaking from hospital yesterday, the Rawsons said that they had huddled together for warmth and ate snow to survive as the days passed. Although they tried to keep their

Pair recovering from frostbite after chance rescue by other climbers, reports Shirley English

spirits up by telling jokes at times they thought they might die. With the wind-chill factor driving temperatures to -21C, their hands became so numb that they could not open their rucksacks to get food.

It was only by chance that they were found on Wednesday night at around 7pm by a group of climbers on a two-day survival course with the National Outdoor Training Centre at Glenmore Lodge. The group called for help, and Mr Rawson and his son were flown to safety by an RAF helicopter.

Yesterday Mr Rawson, who has also climbed in the Rocky Mountains and the French Alps, said: "I knew we were in a precarious situation. It was

daunting sitting there watching the hours go by. I did consider trying to make my way down the mountain in the teeth of the blizzard, but luckily I decided to sit it out. My fingers were useless and numb, so it was very frustrating."

David said that he had faith in his father, but was very scared at times. "Dad was not showing much fear. I did have confidence in him, but there were times that I questioned him about just how serious a position we were in. I now realise how close to death we came."

The pair had set off on Sunday morning intending to stay out for a few days. They parked at the skiers' car park at Coire Cas and left a route map in the car.

They then walked up the Lairig Ghru, the pass that runs across the Cairngorms, and dug in overnight. But as the weather deteriorated, they decided to try to make it to the Shelter Stone near Loch Avon.

Mr Rawson said: "The snow was not deep enough to build a proper snow hole and we could not even get our kit inside it because it was only big enough for the two of us."

They were forced to use the rucksacks to block the entrance. "We just ate snow because I knew we needed as much liquid as we could get. When the weather temporarily cleared a bit late on Wednesday we could see the lights of

Aivemore and that inspired us to keep going. By that time I knew we were in a very precarious situation."

Mr Rawson said that he wanted to thank the party that found them, as well as the RAF crew that picked them

up. He said, however, that he expected to be in trouble when he returned home to his wife, Cynthia, 42, and their daughter, Emma, 22.

Coire Domhain, the plateau on which they sheltered, lies between the 4,064ft summit of

Cairngorm and that of 4,295ft Ben Macdui, Britain's second-highest mountain. Tim Walker, of Glenmore Lodge, said: "The conditions earlier this week on the summit plateau were as bad as can be experienced anywhere in the world."

David Rawson and his father, John, huddled together and ate snow to survive a blizzard on a Scottish plateau

Rescued man loses his hands and feet

BY GILLIAN HARRIS
SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

A CLIMBER who survived a five-day ordeal in the French Alps in which his friend died has had his hands and feet amputated.

Jamie Andrew, 29, suffered frostbite after being trapped near the summit of a mountain at Chamonix. His friend Jamie Fisher froze to death.

Mr Andrew's father, Howard, who has been at his hospital bedside since the accident last month, said: "My son has regrettably had to have both feet and both hands amputated. Surgeons tried desperately to save one hand but were unable to do so."

The two climbers, who shared a flat in Edinburgh, had been attempting to scale Les Droites near Mont Blanc when they became stuck on an icy ridge. Mr Andrew said later: "The one thing that kept us going was our friendship. On several occasions we had to keep each other going. Sadly, only I made it."

Mr Andrew is expected to return to his parents' home in Glasgow next week.

□ A 24-year-old woman died and another skier was injured after an avalanche in the Jura range in eastern France.

The French authorities yesterday lifted a five-day ban on off-piste skiing in the French Alps.

'Keep out drunks to cut cell deaths'

BY STEWART TENDLER, CRIME CORRESPONDENT

THE Police Complaints Authority has called for reform of the drinking laws so that drunks can be taken to care centres rather than going into police cells.

The suggestion comes in a report today on deaths in custody. The authority argues that police cells are the wrong place to hold drunks and that arresting them for being drunk and disorderly is an expensive waste of time.

It says that the Government should consider scrapping the offence of being drunk and disorderly, so that drunks can instead be sent to care centres to recover or to detoxification centres run by the health service and social services.

Drunks are often arrested for their own safety rather than because they are a risk to the public, the report says, and only need a place to sleep off the effects of alcohol. Each such arrest costs £200, it says. Drugs or alcohol accounted for 79 of the 195 deaths in custody between 1994-95 and

1997-98. Twenty-nine were a consequence of medical reasons and 25 of suicide.

The report found that the number of deaths in custody continues to rise. Between 1970 and 1979 there was 274 deaths, an average of 27 a year. Since 1990 there has been an average of 54 a year.

The report promises new guidelines soon to end the "agonising" delay suffered by families trying to find out how relatives died in police custody. The authority said it hoped for a new spirit of openness.

The report says that there is concern about the use of restraints by officers during arrests, and it has repeatedly warned forces about neck-holds and handcuffing offenders behind their backs while they are on the ground.

The authority lists 16 recommendations on the handling of prisoners, such as more specialist training and better monitoring, which it says could cut the number of deaths each year by two thirds.

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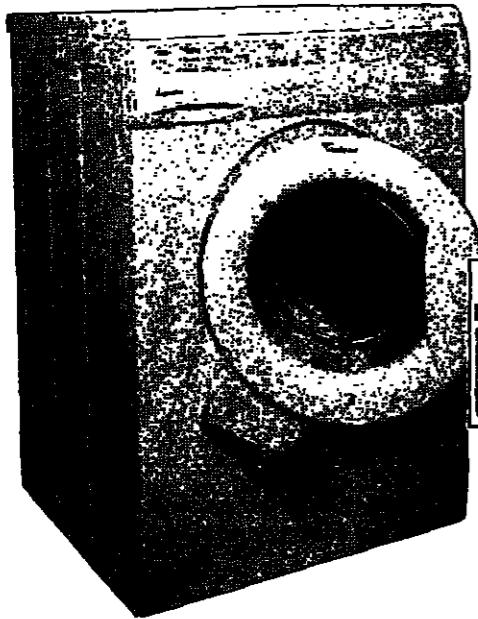
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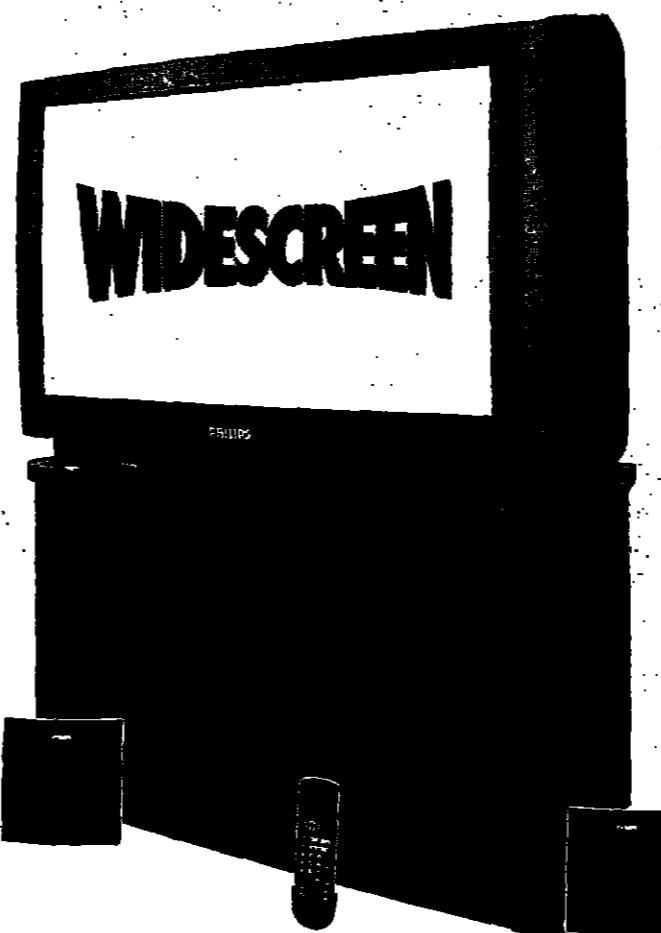
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THE TIMES FRIDAY FEBRUARY 19 1999

Stop ignoring wrongdoers, says Straw

The Home Secretary has intervened as a good citizen several times, reports Richard Ford

JACK STRAW urged people yesterday to join his crusade to end tolerance of anti-social and criminal behaviour, telling of how himself had challenged a boy who was spitting at people at a railway station.

The Home Secretary disclosed that he had intervened on several occasions, tackling a burglar, a mugger, a man involved in an assault, and, just a fortnight ago, confronting an 11-year-old who was spitting on passengers from a parapet.

But Mr Straw, who regularly goes jogging, warned people not to put themselves in danger by "having a go", especially if they were not as fit as he is. He said that members of the public should instead perhaps speak to wrongdoers and add that older women on housing estates were often particularly likely to confront youngsters involved in anti-social behaviour. "I am not prepared to tell people to be a have-a-go hero," he said. "I am fit and active. It is about having a word with people."

The Home Secretary, who has intervened in incidents near his home in South London and in his Blackburn constituency, said that when it was safe to do so people should speak to youngsters doing wrong. He added, however, that people "should not do foolhardy things".

Addressing a conference in London organised by the Social Market Foundation, Mr Straw said that everyone had considered what it would feel like

if he was spat upon while walking along. He said the lad, who did not recognise him, had at first talked back at him, had then calmed down.

A community worker in Glasgow said that Mr Straw was being simplistic. Bob Holman said: "It is the glib remark of a wealthy politician. Action needs to be taken collectively within a neighbourhood and by people who are in a good relation with the youngsters who cause trouble."

But church leaders welcomed the call for an end to the "walk on by" society. The Methodist Church said the Home Secretary was taking the example of the Good Samaritan seriously.



Jack Straw yesterday. He recently reprimanded a boy who was spitting at people

Keep out
drugs
to cut cell dea



Children at play on a South London estate yesterday

Clean-up is put to test in Straw poll

By ADAM SHERWIN

WHERE better to test Jack Straw's "get involved" plea than on his own patch? A tour of the Home Secretary's daily haunts, from the Home Office to his South London home, uncovered the kind of antisocial behaviour that often sends Mr Straw into collar-feeling action. Can one man, armed only with a copy of Mr Straw's speech, clean up the streets?

First stop, the Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate. A family of four in matching shellsuits walks past. The youngest child tosses a chocolate wrapper over his shoulder. Time to step in. Shouldn't you put that into a bin? "Pick it up, son," orders the apologetic dad. Son obeys — a moral victory. Emboldened, I head towards Pimlico, where Mr Straw educated his son and was chairman of the governors at the comprehensive. Two known troublemakers are observed acting suspiciously on College Green. They are Clare Short and Caroline Aherne, aka Mrs Merton, who are about to launch a campaign to tackle blindness. Ms Aherne sniffs into a tissue. "I have got a terrible cold," she complains. Perhaps sensing my fear that the tissue is about to litter the Green, Ms Aherne wisely tucks it into a pocket.

Time to head south of the river towards Kennington, Jack Straw's manor. Four children, aged about 8, are playing in a park adjoining a Lambeth estate. It appears that spitting is taking place. "I spit," claims one child proudly. Jack Straw says you shouldn't. The boy invokes *Match of the Day*. "Footballers have to spit. They do it all the time." Does anyone tell him not to spit? "My mum, but I don't listen to her."

A police van arrives and two

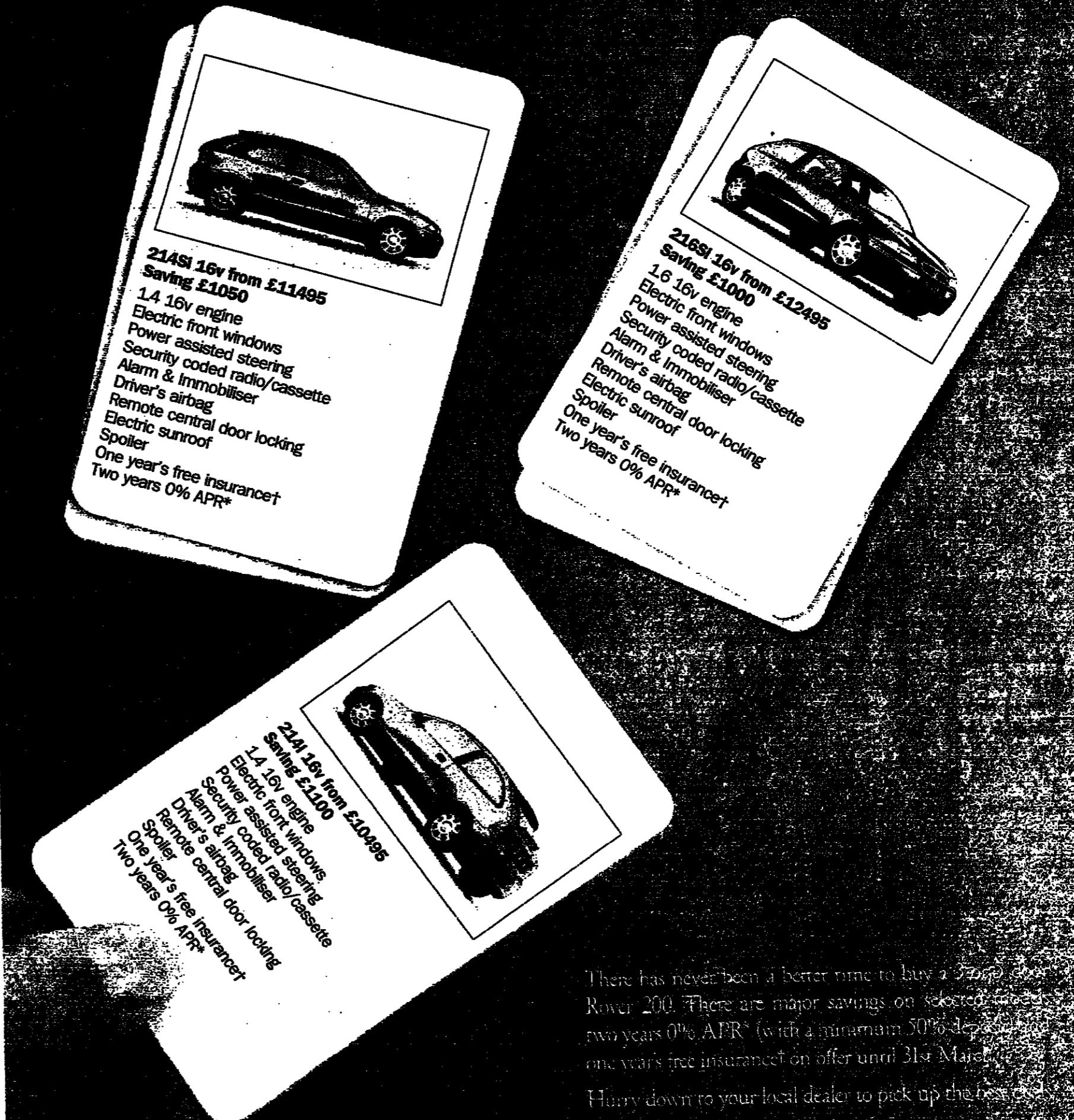
officers emerge to arrest a young black male. Can I assist? "No, please leave this to us," says an officer as he puts handcuffs on the man. The police get no support from the residents. "That boy is a harmless schizophrenic," says one woman. "There is no crime here. The police are racist," insists a man with four children. As he ushers them home, he unleashes a volley of spit.

St Agnes Place, which borders Kennington Park, is a crime troubleshoot. There has been a murder and a triple shooting in recent months. The road is covered in glass from a recently vandalised Fiat Uno. Two Rastafarian men approach from the house opposite as I inspect the damage. Could they have intervened to prevent the crime? "You shouldn't be here. This is private property," one suggests. He requests my business card and, when he has satisfied himself, allows me to leave.

Ena, a sprightly 85-year-old, is carrying her shopping home. She is something of a "have-a-go granny". "I told some kids to stop causing trouble on the Tube recently — and they did," she says proudly. "When I was younger the worst you saw was fistfights. Now the kids carry knives."

Ena is fortunate to be a resident on the safest road in the country. "I live on the same street as Jack Straw. There is a policeman posted permanently outside his front door."

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Britain divided into doers and thinkers

By ALEX O'CONNELL

THE people of Britain are divided into those who would leap, like Clark Kent, into action at the scene of a crime. and those who would think twice before doing something they might regret.

The philosopher Roger Scruton said he had no option but to get stuck in when he saw three 12-year-old children vandalising the carriage of a London Underground train. He eventually stopped them. "I just went up and shouted."

However, Mr Scruton said that the law was making it more difficult for onlookers to get involved in a dispute. "The natural way is to go up and give the children a slap, but you would end up in jail and they know that."

Paul Killik, a senior partner of the southwest London stockbroking firm Killik & Co agreed. "I wouldn't always help because a quick reaction could find you contravening a law or rule."

Rabbi Julia Neuberger said that her instinct was to get in-

volved, but she realised that this was not always wise. "Where we used to live there was a street brawl and two rather large men much younger and bigger than me were laying into each other. I said: 'Don't you think it might be a good idea to stop that?' And they did."

Rabbi Neuberger said that another time she was in a bank during a smash and grab raid. "It was clear that that the only sensible thing was to not get involved."

Martin Bell, MP for Tatton, said he was a natural interventionist. "I have more experience of war crimes than post office robberies. In the former you just don't walk on by."

Sylvia Morris, head teacher of Cathedral Primary School in southeast London, said fear of reprisals often overrode her moral instinct. "There is a saying around here that 'Bermondsey boys don't do'. In a school context, if you go and intervene you will get a brick through the window."

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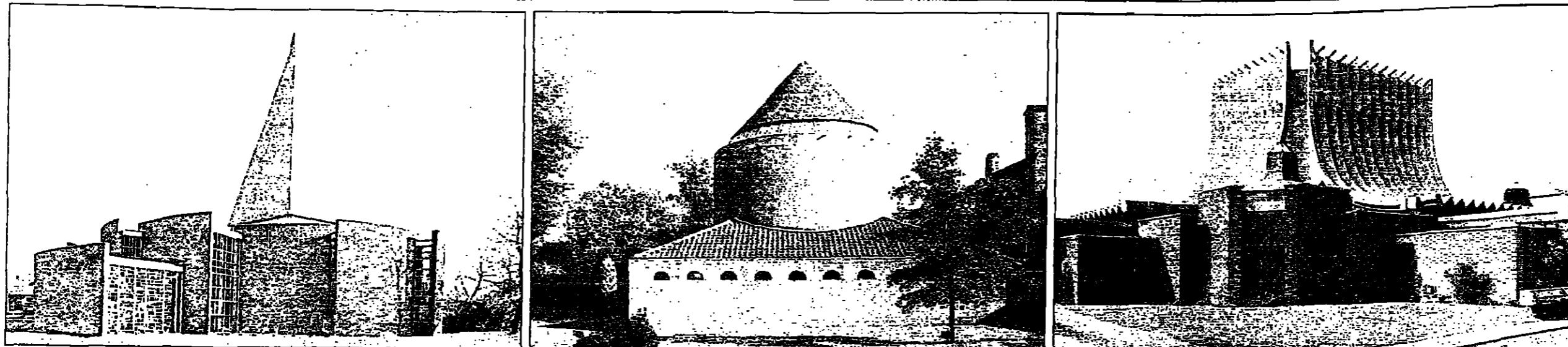
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Worthy of praise: St Peter's in the parish of Greenhill, Sheffield; the Anglican convent church at West Malling, Kent, where the font is a firkin vat; and Our Lady Help of Christians Roman Catholic church in Birmingham

Modern church buildings make the grade

A CONCRETE convent church and a parish church with stainless steel fittings are among modern buildings that have been listed as architectural gems.

The Culture Department yesterday announced Grade II status for them. West Malling Abbey, an Anglican Benedictine convent in Kent, has a church rebuilt in 1966 with concrete block walls, reinforced concrete beams and nuns' stalls made of blockboard. The church, which

Creations in concrete and steel are now recognised as outstanding architecture, writes Ruth Gledhill

sits between buildings of medieval ragstone, is lit by hanging glass spheres. The font is a firkin vat set in concrete.

Among its admirers is *Concrete Quarterly*, which referred to a "skillful use of modern materials" linked to 11th century buildings "without any apparent discordant note". The abbey was founded in 1090 by Gun-

duff, Bishop of Rochester, and the church incorporates a Grade I medieval west front and transept.

The building is one of three 1960s churches that were recommended for Grade II listing by English Heritage. Another is St Peter's in Greenhill, Sheffield, which includes a Communion rail of stainless steel and wood, and a stainless steel

cross suspended over a grey marble altar.

Also listed is the Roman Catholic church of Our Lady Help of Christians in Tile Cross, Birmingham, built in 1967 by Richard Gilbert Scott, a son of the architectural dynasty founded in the Victorian era by Sir George Gilbert Scott, designer of St Pancras Station and the For-

sign Office. Peter Smith, listings inspector for English Heritage, admitted that some people might not consider all the churches to be beautiful. "They are not as ugly as some of the postwar buildings we have looked at," he said.

"If you accept that we list buildings of any sort, then it is very hard to know why we would not list mod-

ern ones as well as old ones. They are the finest pieces of design, and every effort must be made to protect them.

Other buildings considered attractive now might not be thought so in the future, he said. "In the 1960s, Victorian buildings such as St Pancras Station were considered very ugly. Now we think of them as

great architecture. There are already some people who think of modern, 1960s buildings as very beautiful. It's a matter of taste."

The Rev Lawrence Jenkins, the vicar of St Peter's, admitted having been surprised to discover last year that his church had been nominated. "It is a remarkable new building," he said. "It is also very attractive, more so from the inside than the outside. It has a numinous quality about it."

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Detective inspector charged with theft

By PAUL WILKINSON

A SENIOR detective who briefed the Prime Minister on "zero tolerance" policing was last night charged with theft from his own station.

Detective Inspector Russ Daglish, a police officer for 20 years, showed Tony Blair around Middlesbrough police station the day before the general election in 1997.

Mr Daglish, 39, and Detective Constable Brendon Whitehead, 34, who also met the Blair party, are accused of the theft of items from the station's stolen property store. Mr Daglish has also been charged with two counts of handling stolen goods. It is alleged that two central heating boilers, recovered as stolen property, were removed from the station days before Mr Blair's visit. One was allegedly fitted at Mr Daglish's home, a 17th-century cottage in Egglestone, Stockton-on-Tees, that he shares with his partner, Sally Ann Knowles, a lawyer with the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr Whitehead had been suspended since soon after fellow officers began investigating the case in December 1997. The officers have been bailed to appear before magistrates next month.

Balloon crew have to hang around

By HELEN RUMBLE

THE British round-the-world balloon attempt was proceeding rather slowly yesterday, as Andy Elson and Colin Prescott drifted at a speed not much more than that of the Moroccan children running delightfully along below them.

Mr Elson, 45, and Mr Prescott, 48, were meandering south at 10mph and 16,000ft using the west coast of Africa as a "waiting room" for a few days before they can catch the right winds. Were they to ascend now they would be surfing a jetstream that would take them straight into China, which has forbidden entry to British-registered balloons. By this morning they expect to have passed the Sahara and to have covered 750 of their projected 18,000 miles.

Mr Elson, from Somerset, used the time to fix a leaking hatch on the *Cable and Wireless* balloon, which he designed and built. His last attempt was in the *Breitling Orbiter*, which ran out of fuel while waiting for permission to fly over China.

"The first 24 hours are critical and we have had a good flight so far," Mr Elson said. "We're relaxed and enjoying the splendid African views."

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School builders rewarded with tribal honours

FIVE builders from Somerset have been made elders of an East African tribe after spending their holiday putting up a classroom in a remote village.

Mark Orchard and his team worked for two weeks without pay to complete the primary school in Kenya. Their reward was to be given Swahili names and appointed elders of the million-strong Giriama tribe at a ceremony performed in traditional costume in front of 5,000 people.

Mr Orchard, 32, is no longer known as Guv'nor back in Weston-super-Mare: he is now Ngumbad, or the Hero. Andy Difford, the bricklayer, has become Kadenge, the Quick One; Dave Rayner, the decorator, is Nguma, the Smiler; and Chris Fisher, the plasterer, is Chadi, the One of Many Works. Their veteran colleague, Reg Daniels, 66, could call himself Tsawekadzanga — the Wise Elder —

Volunteers who helped Kenyan village now go by Swahili names, reports Simon de Bruxelles

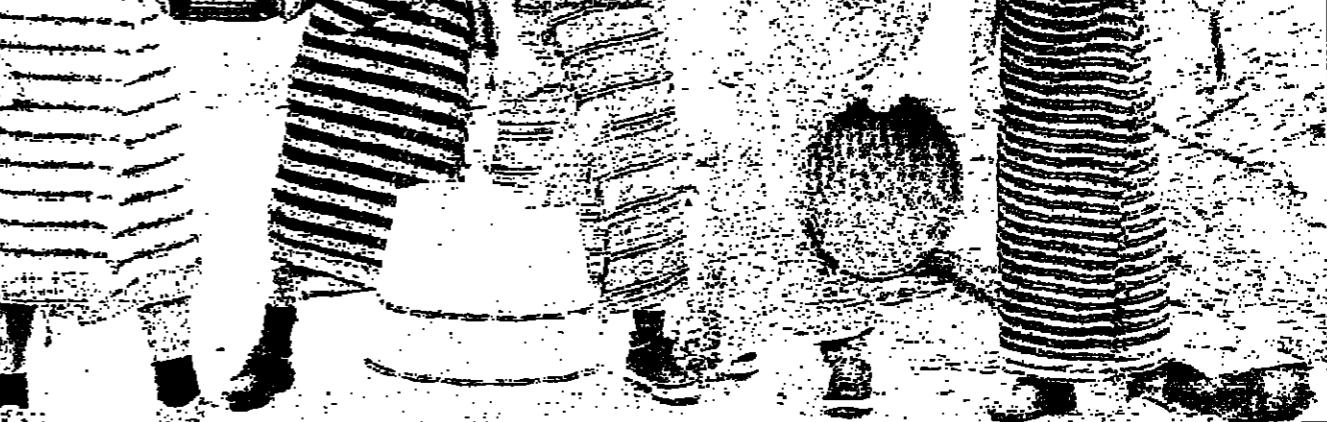
except that few people can pronounce it. Mr Orchard was also presented with a ceremonial wand carved with an elephant and two lions, which gives him the power to vote on tribal issues at elders' meetings.

After his return home yesterday, he said: "It was an incredible honour and very humbling. We were told this is the first time white men or foreigners have been made elders." The ceremony was

carried out by the village medicine man, Swahili. "It was very emotional and we all had lumps in our throats," Mr Orchard said. "A couple of the lads were close to tears and they are big burly builders. Afterwards, nobody called us our English names. Waiters, taxi drivers, teachers and schoolchildren all knew us by our Swahili names."

Mr Orchard first learnt of the plight of the school in the poverty-stricken village of Wazamu when he was on holiday in Kenya last year. Villagers had spent ten years scraping together enough money to pay for building materials for the classroom. At that rate it was going to take them six more years to raise enough to pay a local labourer £1 a day to construct it.

Mr Orchard, who normally charges £60 a day, offered to do the job for nothing and recruited four volunteers from



Out of Africa: left to right, Mark Orchard, named Ngumbad in Swahili, with Reg Daniels, Dave Rayner, Andy Difford and Chris Fisher

his firm, Clayton Construction, to help. He persuaded his builders' merchant to sponsor the trip and negotiated cheap fares with an airline.

"I got back to England and asked if anyone would be interested in doing two weeks

unpaid work in Kenya. They all jumped at it and within three hours we had talked the airline into giving us flights at cost price and persuaded some of our suppliers to pay for the fares."

The team worked from Sam

to 8pm each day to finish the job in two weeks. They were watched by hundreds of curious onlookers, fascinated by the sight of white men doing manual labour. "They had never seen white people working. White people had always

told them to work," Mr Orchard said. "Each day more and more people would come to watch; some days there would be 2,000 there."

"We had to work with coral blocks, which were nothing like any stone we had worked

with before. There was no water or electricity and one of the lads passed out with sunstroke. The working conditions were difficult and we are knackered, but it was incredibly satisfying doing something to help."

Gang murder informer fails to halt TV film

BY PETER GLEESON

A DOCUMENTARY on a gangland triple execution is due to be broadcast next month after a judge yesterday rejected an informer's claim that the programme could help bounty hunters to track him down.

Mr Justice Morland dismissed an injunction aimed at stopping the screening of *Inside Story: Supergrass*, which focuses on the so-called Essex Range Rover murders and is scheduled for March 2.

The injunction was brought by the "supergrass", Darren Nichols, 33, who claims he has a £500,000 bounty on his head after giving evidence against fellow gang members. He was concerned that interviews he gave to the BBC about the 1995 murders might help gangland executioners to track him down.

Mr Justice Morland, at the High Court, said trailers for the programme and newspaper reports about it could already have been seen by Nichols's enemies. "I have reached the clear conclusion that there would be no significant extra risk to the plaintiff by the broadcast."

Essex police supported Nich-

ols, arguing that his appearance would further jeopardise his own and his family's safety. They said that they had not taken part in the documentary, adding that people in witness protection programmes should not draw extra attention to themselves.

Nichols's evidence to the Old Bailey was crucial in convicting Michael Steele and Jack Whomes, jailed for life for the execution of rival drug dealers Pat Tate, 37, Tony Tucker, 38, and Craig Roffe, 26.

He drove the getaway car after Steele, 33, and Whomes, 37, lured their three rivals to an isolated field, near Basildon, Essex, after promising them a share in a cocaine drop. When the three men arrived in a Range Rover they were blasted to death with a shotgun. For his damning evidence, Nichols did not go to prison. He now lives under a new identity and gets welfare benefits of £48 a week.

Nichols's lawyers argued that a locality in the film might be recognised, giving him a better idea of his new address. The BBC argued that footage had been filmed "many miles from his new home".

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Time to lay down the law on judges' dual roles

**Peter
RIDDELL**
ON POLITICS

Good chaps know how to behave sensibly, especially if they are judges. That was the gist of much of a debate in the Lords on Wednesday about the separation of powers — the triple role of the Lord Chancellor as a member of Cabinet, presiding officer of the Lords and head of the judiciary, and the double role of the law lords as members of the senior court and legislators. This overlap was defended on the typically British grounds that it works and is rooted in the monarchial constitution and the medieval High Court of Parliament. But too many speakers failed to recognise how far the old conventions are being stretched to breaking point.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill, the Lib-

eral Democrat lawyer who initiated the debate, argued that the roles of the Lord Chancellor and the other law lords have changed greatly because of the Human Rights Act, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland devolution and the reform of Parliament. Senior judges will increasingly have to rule on highly sensitive political issues, and adjudicate between Westminster and the devolved bodies. The fuss over Lord Hoffman and the Pinochet case is a foretaste of much greater public scrutiny.

Yet the law lords are also legislators. The convention that they do not become involved in contentious issues has increasingly been breached as they have spoken and moved amendments on various criminal jus-

tice Bills. Two years ago, Lord Home-Wilkinson, now the senior law lord, sat as a member of the committee hearing an appeal against a decision by Michael Howard, then Home Secretary, before the court adjourned so the judge could support an opposition amendment to Mr Howard's Bill that session.

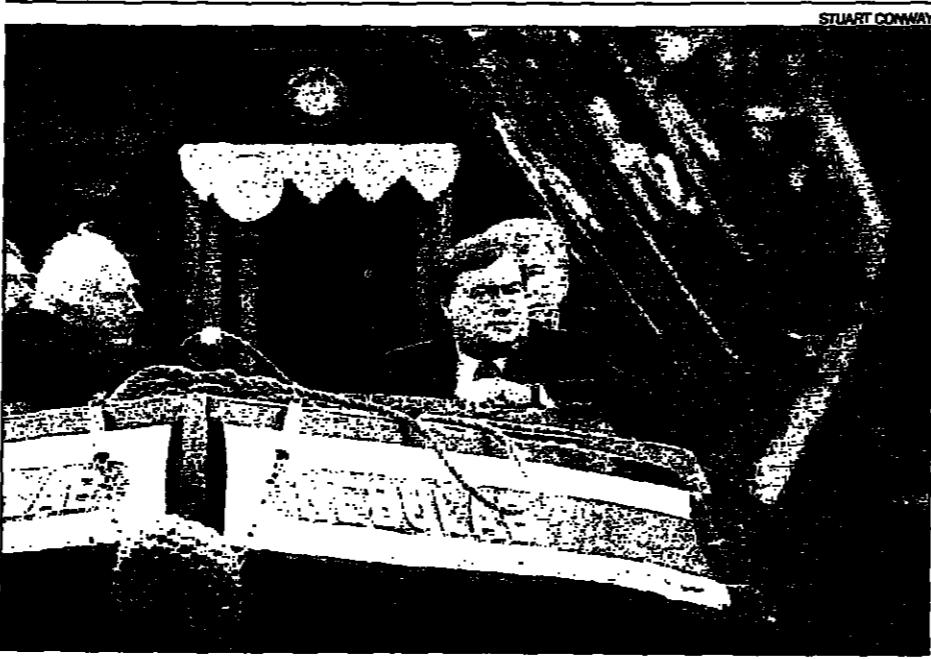
The triple roles of the Lord Chancellor are also anomalous. Lord Irvine of Lairg is unusual in co-ordinat-

ing the constitutional reform programme as well as heading the judiciary and occasionally sitting as a law lord. The legal basis for this may be in doubt. The European Court of Human Rights will shortly decide whether to uphold the opinion of the European Commission of Human Rights in McConnell's case that the Bailiff of Guernsey's presiding over both court and legislature, while being head of its administration, was incompatible with the requisite appearance of independence and impartiality of a court of law. Lord Lester said this could directly affect the Lord Chancellor's ability to sit judicially on matters of public policy.

Lord Lester and his fellow Lib Dem lawyer Lord Goodhart argued

for a much clearer separation of roles. Lord Goodhart made a strong case for the Lord Chancellor not judging judicially at all and questioned whether serving, as opposed to retired, law lords could remain legislators. Other speakers argued that the Lord Chancellor and other law lords know how, and when, to exercise self-restraint. But this took insufficient account of the impact of constitutional changes, welcome or not.

Lord Irvine saw the Lord Chancellor as "a critical cusp in the separation of powers", personally protecting the judiciary from executive interference. But we are moving to a more formal system. As Lord Lester said, "trust me" is no longer enough: we need "criteria and principles".



John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, took a narrowboat yesterday to announce an extra £24 million for inland waterways to promote canals as alternative transport

Darling pledges to publish yearly poverty audit

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT, AND JASON ALLARDYCE

ALISTAIR DARLING yesterday promised to publish an annual poverty audit, but declined to specify who should be officially classified as poor.

The Social Security Secretary said that the welfare system in its current form was a major contributor to the nation's poverty. "The system has become part of the prob-

lem — encouraging dependency by passively paying out benefit. Encouraging people to feel that the best they can expect is a lifetime on benefit," he told workers at a jobcentre in Edinburgh.

The way out of poverty, Mr Darling said, was to encourage more people off benefits and into work and to improve educational standards. In the last 20 years, although spending on social security had risen by 90 per cent, poverty had increased.

The Social Security Secretary emphasised that there was no question of compelling the disabled or lone parents to take jobs under the recently announced welfare reform proposals. But Mr Darling said the Government was making "a radical break from the past" by tackling the causes of poverty. "I make no apology whatsoever for our approach."

He added: "We promised to cut the bills of social and economic failure and that means preventing the causes of that failure. We are changing the approach with a new culture and a new way of working."

While campaigners welcomed the audit, they were highly critical of Mr Darling's emphasis on paid employment as a solution to poverty.

Martin Barnes, director of the Child Poverty Action Group, said that to suggest that work could lift everyone out of poverty was "a cruel myth". "Paid work is not always an option for all — people with disabilities, lone parents and carers face many obstacles to employment, even if there are jobs available."

Sue Middleton, of Loughborough University, an expert in childhood poverty, said: "Publishing an annual poverty au-

dit is a major step forward, but it needs to measure poverty in as many of its dimensions as possible. Saying that there is no measure of poverty is a bit of a cop-out." Ms Middleton's own research has shown that income support would cover just over half of what is spent on a child aged under 11.

DSS officials refused to be drawn yesterday on where the poverty line should be drawn. A spokeswoman said that the annual audit would focus on the numbers of people living in households where the entire family income came to less than half the national average household income, which is currently £255 a week after housing costs and tax.

Nearly 12 million people, roughly 24 per cent of the population, fall into this category. The Government is acutely aware that if it is to succeed in cutting the £98 billion social security bill, it must reduce this figure. The decision to publish an annual audit of its progress is seen as a signal of its willingness to be judged on this front.

The initiative follows the publication last year of a report by an independent inquiry led by Sir Donald Acheson, the former Chief Medical Officer, which found that the poor can expect to live five years less than the rich.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the gap between the rich and poor, which had shrunk slightly in the early 1990s, had started to widen again in the middle of the decade.

Mr Darling, whose first audit is expected in the summer, will also monitor the effectiveness of the New Deal and how tackling literacy and truancy can help people get a job and a decent wage.

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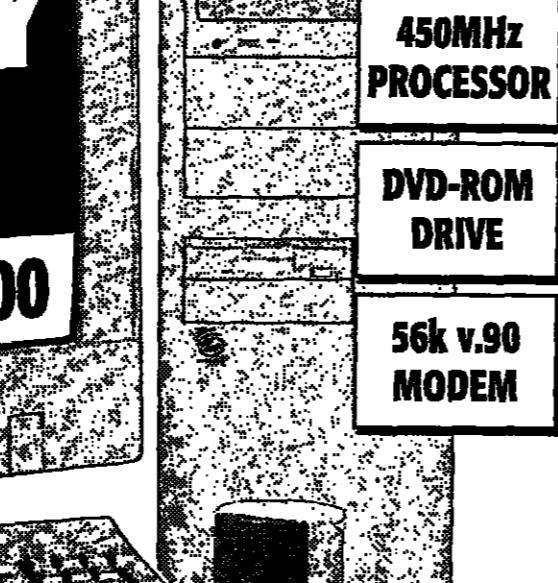
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Surge in live kidney donations saves 68 extra lives

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE number of live kidney donors in Britain grew by an unprecedented 38 per cent last year. The unexpected increase enabled 241 patients to be given a kidney from a living donor, compared with 173 the year before.

About 15 per cent of kidney transplants in Britain are now provided by living donors, although the level is only half that in Scandinavia and the United States.

Sir Peter Morris, who chaired a recent Royal College of Surgeons of England working party on organ transplantation, said: "We have not carried out any publicity campaign for living donors and the main reason I can think of for the sudden increase is that the public have at last become aware that live donation is possible."

"There has also been a change of attitude by a number of surgeons in this country who were against the idea in the past."

Sir Peter, who is Nuffield Professor of Surgery at Oxford University, said he hoped that donations from live donors in Britain would eventually provide at least 25 per cent of the kidneys needed.

The shortage of organs means that kidney patients usually have to spend many months on dialysis, waiting for a transplant.

Those with blood group A wait an average of ten months, those with blood group O wait 14 months and those with blood group B for 16 months. Most living donors are parents who want to spare their child a long and traumatic period of dialysis.

The operation to remove the kidney takes about two hours and a further three hours is needed to transplant it into the recipient.

Donor and recipient are usually well enough to leave hospital within a fortnight and the donor is generally able to resume a normal life soon

Air bags boom may harm hearing

By IAN MURRAY

AIR BAGS in cars save lives but can cause tinnitus and deafness, researchers say. The loud noise generated as the bags inflate has been blamed for the hearing loss.

Inflation of the air bag creates a sound of up to 170 decibels for 0.1 of a second, according to the study led by Graham Buckley, from St James's University Hospital, Leeds, with the help of the Vehicle Safety Research Centre, at Loughborough.

Tests using squirrel monkeys found that this noise level did not cause permanent hearing damage or ear-drum perforation. However, the researchers say in the *British Medical Journal* today that the effect on human beings is likely to be more serious, causing acoustic trauma.

In two cases where air bags inflated in low-speed accidents — one at 15mph and the other at 20mph — the researchers found that the drivers suffered hearing loss and tinnitus. They said that there was also a strong possibility of cochlear damage.

The authors say it is surprising that hearing loss is not reported more frequently after air-bag inflation, although this may be because of other factors associated with accidents. The level of the noise in the vehicle depends on the number of occupants, ventilation, size and the number of air bags.

Safety design is moving towards fitting vehicles with air bags that inflate in frontal and side crashes for both the driver and the front-seat passenger. The report says that lack of space means the side bags inflate close to the ear. More ear injuries from air bags are therefore likely in the future, the researchers say.



Katsuki Yuzawa and two other college students get to grips with their training. He plans to return to Japan when he graduates in October

Japanese happy to be the odd man out

By CLAUDIA JOSEPH

THE Norland College, which has trained nannies for the Princess Royal, the Duchess of York and Mick Jagger, has broken with 100 years of tradition to take its first male student.

Katsuki Yuzawa has swapped life in Japan, where he has spent the past four years working at his parents' private nursery, for starched uniforms and Silver Cross prams. He is taking a one-year postgraduate diploma course for international students at the college, near Hungerford in Berkshire, and plans to return to Japan when he graduates in October.

Mr Yuzawa, 22, who comes from Tochigi, said: "I am here because I like children and I like this job taking care of children." He applied for a place after his mother spotted the course while on a tour of training centres in England. He pays £3,600 a term for tuition, board and lodging. But while the other nannies wear brown dresses, hard hats and long brown coats, he sports a navy blazer, burgundy tie and grey flannel trousers.

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The Megane



GM crops set for delay until after election

GENETICALLY modified crops are unlikely to be grown commercially until after the next election. A team of scientists and wildlife experts, set up by ministers to assess the impact of the new technology on the countryside and farming, said yesterday that their work could not be completed "for at least three years".

Michael Meacher, the Environment Minister, who has already secured a one-year voluntary ban from the food industry, said that the Government would stand by the working group set up under his department's Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment. "We will not allow commercial plantings to proceed until we are sure there will be no significant damage to the environment," he said.

John Berringer, chairman of the new working group and of the advisory committee, said that he thought widespread commercial plantings were unlikely for "five to ten years". If the research could demonstrate that significant harm would be inflicted on wildlife and the environment, then the Government could unilaterally ban the crops in Europe, said Professor Berringer.

Experts say they need three years to investigate countryside risks, reports

Nick Nuttall

ger, who is based at Bristol University.

Norman Baker, a Liberal Democrat spokesman, challenged the Government's assertion that the acreage of genetically modified test crops was the "size of two football pitches".

The official government statistic is about 717 acres, the equivalent of 350 pitches. Mr Baker was dismayed that only one government inspector had been assigned to monitor the GM crops.

There is a formidable challenge ahead for the new working group, which will include industrialists, scientists, a member of English Nature, the Government's wildlife adviser, a member of the Royal Society for the Protection of

Birds, and, it is hoped, a farming expert.

Professor Berringer said that there was little research of value from the United States, where millions of acres are given over to genetically modified crops. Farming there was kept separate from wildlife, whereas in Britain the two were intertwined. He added that Britain's countryside was already an artificial place created by man over many thousands of years.

"We cannot answer what the biodiversity of any wildlife should be in different parts of Britain. But we have to think about this. If you can't define it, you can't defend it in court. It is a major task," Professor Berringer said.

Brian Johnson, of English Nature, who has been appointed to the working group, said that he expected the research to lead to laws on the way that farmers spray herbicides. Herbicide-tolerant crops allow farmers to spray more heavily, he said, killing weeds but leaving the crop untouched. It is feared that this will eradicate the weeds on which birds and other wildlife depend.

Dr Johnson said that it would become crucial to have new rules requiring farmers to

leave strips of land free from sprays. "We are facing an extremely powerful agricultural system that gives even small farmers the ability to grow completely weed-free fields."

The first field trials of genetically modified crops have been given the go-ahead for this year. Mr Meacher said that if he was not satisfied with the results, he would seek a further voluntary ban on the release of

commercial crops so that more field trials can take place.

Mark Avery, of the RSPB, who was appointed to the working group yesterday, said that only two farms were being used this year. It would be impossible to assess the impact on the whole of Britain's wildlife from such modest trials.

"It seems highly unlikely that meaningful trials of genetically modified crops will happen

this year. This scientific work is going to take at least three years, which will not be completed until after the general election," Dr Avery said.

Even without the scientific research, commercial plantings are impossible before the summer of 2001. The French Government has blocked the consents needed to commercialise herbicide-tolerant oilseed rape. The crop is the only

one ready to be marketed that British farmers may wish to grow.

Mr Meacher has presented the one-year voluntary agreement as a victory for the Government and public concern. But Hugh Manning, biotechnology regulatory affairs head at AgrEvo in King's Lynn, Norfolk, which has developed the new rape crop, said: "We could not have gone ahead anyway

this year. We decided not to produce a lot of seed because of the delay in France."

Pete Riley, of Friends of the Earth, said: "Meacher's moratorium is a con. They are hiding behind French skirts. The French moratorium is until June or July 2000 anyway."

**Leading article, and Letters, page 23
Media, page 39**



Four tonnes of genetically modified soya beans were dumped near the Prime Minister's Downing Street home by protesters yesterday as others occupied part of Liverpool Docks to block shipments from America. Lord Melchett, executive director of Greenpeace, which carried out the actions, accused Tony Blair of being "out of step with public opinion" over genetically modified foods. Seven members of the pressure group were arrested

Hume fears reaching point of no return



Hume: contamination would be "very serious"

By NICK NUTTALL AND RUTH GLEDHILL

LEADING Roman Catholics, including the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume, have added their voice to concerns over genetically modified crops and foods.

Cardinal Hume said yesterday: "Before we interfere with nature, we need to assess carefully whether the benefits in one area are going to lead to unacceptable results in another." Speaking on Radio 4's *Today* programme, he said it would be "a very serious matter" if genetically modified crops contaminated other crops.

His concern was echoed by John Gummer, the former Environment Secretary, writing in the Catholic weekly *The Tablet*. In the Conservative administration, it was Mr Gummer who authorised trials of some genetically modified crops, but yesterday he said that he backed the position of the Government's wildlife advisers over the need for a three-year moratorium to assess the impact on the wider environment. Mr

Gummer likened the emergence of modified crops to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: "Once we have eaten of the fruit of the tree there is no going back." But this was no excuse for rushing into approving commercial releases until the question of harm to wildlife is resolved.

"There is much to be done. That is why the demand of English Nature for a breathing space while these real worries are considered, is a proper way forward environmentally," he said.



Gummer: favours a three-year moratorium

Wildlife risk will grow, says 'suppressed' report

MODERN farming has seriously damaged British wildlife and the widespread introduction of genetically modified crops could trigger a further decline.

The stark warning came in an official report to ministers by the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment, which was published yesterday after claims that ministers had suppressed it. The report will guide the new working group on the countryside issues arising from genetically altered crops.

The report, written by a civil

servant in the Department of the Environment's biotechnology unit, said that postwar intensification of farming, chemical sprays and advanced forms of plant breeding had already taken a toll on wildlife, particularly birds. It points to collapses since 1975 in the population of turtle doves (down 79 per cent), linnets (down 49 per cent) and corn buntings (down 80 per cent).

The conventional development of crops that can tolerate winter conditions has led to the autumn sowing of wheat protected by fungicides. "This has removed the necessity for winter fallows and... is considered to be the major cause of the recent decline in some farmland bird populations," the report says.

It also said that the widespread planting of gene-modified crops with features such as herbicide resistance could either reduce or increase the use of agricultural chemicals.

It says that the time has come to take into account the wider environmental impacts and how the crops will be grown in "real fields into the marketing approval process".

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KURDISH CRISIS: MINISTERS PAY THE PRICE

Cabinet is purged in Greece as public applauds

Pro-Kurdish feeling in the country claims its first scapegoats for a fiasco, writes John Carr in Athens

IN A dramatic sequel to two days of intense national controversy over Greece's role in the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish guerrilla chief, Theodoros Pangalos, the Foreign Minister, and two other Cabinet ministers were dismissed yesterday.

The sackings were a desperate move by Costas Simitis, the Prime Minister, to halt a nosedive in the popularity of his Socialist Government in the face of overwhelmingly pro-Kurdish sentiment here. For months, Mr Simitis's Government has been heavily criticised as weak in the face of per-

ceived Turkish pressures and as too ready to bow to Brussels and Washington.

Mr Simitis moved quickly to replace Mr Pangalos with George Papandreou, his deputy, whose soft-spoken style often helped to smooth feathers ruffled by his predecessor.

A son of the Socialist Party founder, the late Andreas Papandreou, he is respected in European capitals and the US.

However, a national convention of the Socialist Party, in which Mr Simitis's leadership could well come under challenge, is only a month away.

Alexandros Papadopoulos.

the Minister for the Interior, and Philippou Patsalikos, the Public Order Minister, were also dismissed over the Government's mishandling of the Ocalan affair.

Mr Pangalos, apparently caught by surprise by his dismissal, had scheduled a meeting with a Slovak visitor, only to have to cut it short to announce his departure. "You will judge whether our handling was the best possible," he told reporters in a rueful jab at the media's mounting criticism of him and its vigorously pro-Kurdish tone.

Mr Pangalos blamed pro-

Kurdish elements in and out of the administration for "a crime against the country" — bringing Mr Ocalan secretly to Greece on at least two occasions in the past month and entangling the Government in the affair. On Tuesday, Mr Pangalos had been forced to disclose Greece's secret sheltering of Mr Ocalan at the Greek Embassy in Nairobi.

The response to his dismissal was electric. "Good riddance to the man!" shouted one worker in a government office. She rushed from the room to tell her colleagues. Outside, people gathered

around car radios to catch the bulletins, many applauding. The reason for the sacking of Mr Papadopoulos and Mr Patsalikos was less clear.

Mr Papadopoulos, bewildered and indignant, claimed to have been kept totally in the dark about Mr Ocalan's stay under secret Greek diplomatic protection. However, his ministry is in charge of the intelligence service, whose agents appear to have been critically involved in all stages of Mr Ocalan's link with Greece.

Sources close to the service told Greek television that one of its officers was emotionally

attached to the Kurdish cause and was at Mr Ocalan side in Kenya on orders from the agency's chiefs.

Mr Patsalikos, who had been Public Order Minister for only three months, said he had been given no information about Mr Ocalan's movements in Greece and Kenya. He implicitly accused the intelligence service of having acted independently of any state authority in admitting Mr Ocalan to Greece briefly last month. His remarks raised the possibility that there is a faction inside the service which has enough influence to

affect the conduct of Greece's foreign policy.

A surprise appointment in the reshuffle was that of the Minister for Culture, Evangelos Venizelos, who has agitated for the return of the Elgin Marbles, to the Development Ministry. Mr Venizelos replaced Vassos Papandreou, who took over the Ministry of the Interior.

■ Nairobi: President Moi of Kenya sacked the heads of the police force, the Criminal Investigations Department and the Immigration Service in the wake of the abduction here of Mr Ocalan. (AFP)



Papandreou: soft-spoken new Foreign Minister



The Kurdish protesters who had occupied the Greek Embassy in London acknowledge supporters as they are driven away in coaches after surrendering to police yesterday

German police arrest protesters

FROM TONY PATERSON
IN BERLIN

POLICE arrested hundreds of Kurdish protesters in towns and cities across Germany yesterday as violent demonstrations over Turkey's capture of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, swept the country for the third successive day.

In an attempt to tighten security after Wednesday's disastrous incident at the Berlin Israeli consulate in which three Kurds were shot dead by Israeli security guards, German police were put on a state of high alert throughout the country's 16 federal states.

Police detained hundreds of militant supporters of the banned Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in Berlin, Wiesbaden, Bremen, Heilbronn, Chemnitz and Stuttgart. The worst violence occurred in Wiesbaden where police used water cannon and baton charges in clashes with some 300 PKK supporters to forcibly end their occupation of the Hessen state interior ministry grounds. Thirteen protesters were subsequently arrested.

In Berlin more than 200 Kurds defied a ban on political demonstrations and tried to stage a silent march to mourn the deaths of the three Kurds, but were thwarted by hundreds of riot police.

Israel steps up security abroad after killings

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

SCORES of extra Israeli security guards have been flown to diplomatic missions and installations abroad in anticipation of attacks to avenge Wednesday's killing of three Kurds who stormed the Israeli consulate in Berlin.

Offices and flights of the national airline El Al are regarded as particularly likely targets and there are fears that Kurds may carry out aircraft hijackings.

A spokesman for the Kurdish underground, Ahmed Yaman, told the biggest-selling Tel Aviv newspaper *Yedioth Aharonot*: "From now on, Israel has become the chief target for terror attacks by the Kurdish rebels, because of the massacre it perpetrated on the Kurds in the consulate in Berlin."

Mr Yaman, speaking at Kurdish offices in Rome, announced that the underground's military wing would strike at Israeli targets "not in Europe, but rather in Turkey and in the Middle East". He attacked the assistance he claimed Israel extended to Turkey in its battle against the Kurds and called relations between the two states "dirty".

Mr Yaman said: "The Jewish nation has suffered more than any other nation on Earth, so how is it possible that you do not understand our suffering?" The paper also quoted one of the Kurds who had been occupying the Greek Embassy in London as saying: "The shooting of women and children was a big mistake for Israel. We will take vengeance on you. How is it that you killed our people? From now on, you are our enemy."

The Kurdish spokesman added: "Now see what is going to happen. We are not the poor Palestinians who do not know how to get organised. We are organised, and your army is going to pay the price."

Ronni Shaked, a former agent for Israel's Shin Bet, the equivalent of MI5, said in the same paper that while opening fire on the Kurds in Berlin may have halted the attack in Germany — justified by Binyamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, as an act of "self defence" — the deaths could end up costing Israeli lives.

"The PKK is going to look for revenge," Mr Shaked predicted. He said a likely target could be Israeli troops in southern Lebanon, where the PKK has training camps and works closely with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah (Party of God). Israel's Channel 2 TV said the Israeli Army, fearing such an attack, was on high alert in southern Lebanon.

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KURDISH CRISIS: TURKEY CRACKS DOWN

Ankara rounds up Kurdish dissidents

TURKEY promised yesterday to give Abdullah Ocalan, the captured Kurdish leader, a fair trial despite international misgivings about Turkey's human rights record.

But as Ankara issued its assurances, police cracked down on Kurdish dissidents, imprisoning hundreds of activists while at the same time launching an attack on Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Turkey "would not tolerate any foreign interference in the trial of Mr Ocalan, nor was captured by Turkish special forces in Nairobi on Monday and brought to Turkey on Tuesday. He is being held in isolation on the prison island of Imrali, where according to some reports the trial may be held. 'Everyone should respect the independence of the Turkish judiciary,'" the Foreign Ministry statement said.

Ismail Cem, the Foreign Minister, said during a visit to Prague that Turkey had "as developed a legal system as any other Western country".

Asked to comment on an appeal lodged by Mr Ocalan with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, asking for emergency measures to protect him from torture, Mr Cem said: "I do not understand what more can be done." He added: "What we have here is a legal matter and our independent judiciary will deal with it."

Turkey insists that the captured rebel leader will get a fair trial, writes Richard Owen in Ankara

Mr Ocalan is to be tried on treason charges, which carry a possible death sentence, although nobody has been executed since 1984. Turkey regards Mr Ocalan and his Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) as responsible for the deaths of nearly 30,000 people during a 14-year-old Kurdish insurgency in southeastern Turkey.

Turkish newspapers yesterday were almost entirely devoted to the capture of Mr Ocalan, who first took refuge in Italy last November but left Rome in the middle of last month and had been a fugitive ever since.

The front page of the newspaper *Miliyete* consisted of a huge photograph of Mr Ocalan in handcuffs on the plane that brought him back to Turkey, guarded by a young special forces commando in a black balaclava under a head-

SERMONS TO PRAISE THE STATE

Ankara: Turkey's state religious authority ordered clerics in their sermons to emphasise crimes committed by Abdullah Ocalan. This even has shown how powerful the Turkish state is. Tell your community what Ocalan has done and the lesson which should be learned from it.

Mehmet Nuri Yilmaz, head of the Religious Affairs Directorate, was quoted as saying.

line consisting of the single word "Finished".

Police yesterday arrested more than 350 supporters of the main legal Kurdish party during raids in Istanbul and towns in southeastern Turkey, according to the Human Rights Association. "We do not have an exact tally," a spokesman said. Television showed further footage from a video taken by intelligence of Mr Ocalan in captivity on the plane, in a move apparently designed to demoralise his followers.

The Council of Europe said that it hoped to send a delegation to Turkey to "assess the conditions under which Abdullah Ocalan is being held". Lord Russell-Johnston, head of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, said that, provided the Turkish authorities co-operated, the delegation would seek assurances

that Mr Ocalan was in good health.

Although Turkish membership of the European Union has long been delayed because of doubts about its human rights record, it is a full Council of Europe member.

Massimo D'Alema, the Italian Prime Minister, said Italy was "worried that Ocalan may not have a fair trial". He recalled that Italy had refused to hand Mr Ocalan to Turkey last November when the Kurdish leader arrived in Rome because the death penalty is in force in Turkey. Mr Ocalan's request for asylum in Italy was still being processed when he left the country last month.

Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish Prime Minister, said that the trial of Mr Ocalan, which is likely to be held within the next 10 to 12 days, would be "very free and very just because justice is very free and autonomous in Turkey".

Defence lawyers from Italy and The Netherlands claiming to represent Mr Ocalan have been denied entry to Turkey.

Mr Ecevit said that the lawyers wanted "to inspect Turkey's system of justice when in fact they have no right to have any doubts about it".

Mr Ocalan's brother Osman, urged Kurdish activists to "burn the enemy" and step up the protests on Turkish soil against Abdullah Ocalan's capture and impending trial.

Simon Jenkins, page 22
Leading article, page 23



Abdullah Ocalan is put on display before facing interrogation yesterday

Military steps up air raids on rebels

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE EDITOR

THOUSANDS of Turkish troops, backed by helicopters and aircraft, conducted attacks on Kurdish rebel positions in northern Iraq yesterday.

Although Ankara denied that the military operation in pursuit of PKK rebels was linked to the seizure of their leader, Abdullah Ocalan, it underlined the Government's apparent determination to cause maximum disruption to the Kurdish cause.

Up to 4,000 soldiers attacked PKK bases in the northeast corner of Iraq, where United Nations humanitarian agencies operate. Some reports suggested that 10,000 troops were involved.

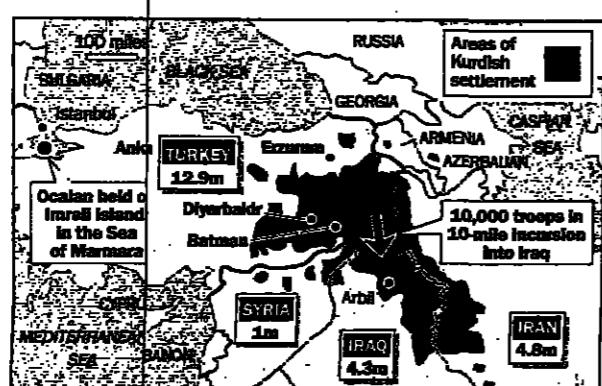
The troops, who advanced at least nine miles into Iraq, were supported by US-made Cobra helicopter gunships and strike aircraft. The gunships fired on rebel positions in the Metina mountains.

A Turkish security official was quoted as saying: "The operation will continue until its aims have been met. The terrorists are in a state of panic."

Although Turkey has retained a semi-permanent force on the northern Iraqi side of the border since the 1991 Gulf War, the latest attack was said by Ankara to be in response to a PKK build-up. Last night the Anatolia news agency reported that PKK camps in northern Iraq were destroyed, forcing the rebels to flee to Iran.

Israel steps up security abroad after killing

Island jail is cleared so special forces can guard their lone prisoner



BY RICHARD OWEN
AND ANDREW FINKEL

AN ENTIRE stretch of Turkish coastline was effectively shut down and deserted yesterday because of the presence in the area of one man: Abdullah Ocalan, the captured Kurdish leader who is being held on the island of Imrali, just over 30 miles south of Istanbul in the Sea of Marmara.

Tourist maps do not tend to make a feature of Imrali. They draw attention instead to the nearby Princes Islands, which are popular resorts

reached by ferry from Istanbul. On the four of the nine Princes Islands that are inhabited, cars are banned and horse-drawn carriages are used.

From a distance, Imrali appears equally picturesque, and even has a small harbour. But the quayside is now covered in armoured military and police vehicles. On closer inspection, Imrali is somewhat grimier than the other islands and appears sparsely wooded and somewhat barren.

Imrali is an island prison, and according to Turkish authorities is an ideal place to hold the captured

Kurdish leader and ensure that no attempts are made to rescue him. The island normally houses some 250 prisoners, all of whom have been transferred elsewhere, leaving Mr Ocalan a lone inmate. He is being guarded by the kind of special forces who captured him in Kenya on Monday night, instead of the usual prison guards.

"Imrali will be a very secure place for him," Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish Prime Minister, said. Turkish naval vessels are patrolling the waters around the four square-mile island, and security has been stepped up in

Bandirma and Mudanya, the two coastal towns that face Imrali. All shops and cafés there have been closed.

Imrali became a Turkish possession in the 14th century, and had a sizeable Greek population until the 1930s when they were sent back to Greece in an exchange of minorities.

The island became a prison two years later. Prisoners on Imrali normally work on a farm, and its products are sold in Istanbul and other Turkish towns. Officials yesterday said it was most unlikely that Mr Ocalan would "engage in agriculture" while he awaits trial. Until recently, Imrali was the "des-res" of the Turkish prisoner elite. It was from the "semi-open" prison that Yilmaz Guney escaped in 1982, when Turkey was under martial law, to collect his Palme d'Or in Cannes for his film, *Yol*.

Yol begins with a group of prisoners departing from Imrali on compassionate leave, only to discover a society less free than the island.

Mr Ocalan is unlikely to get that opportunity. The suggestion is that he will be tried in a court set up on the island.

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Hillbilly robbers spend their way into jail

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON

A GANG of mobile home-dwelling hillbillies have made a name for themselves by pulling off one of America's biggest robberies — and being among the dumbest criminals.

The gang escaped with \$17 million (£10.4 million) after an audacious robbery. But they were caught because they could not wait to spend their loot.

Steve Chambers had conspired with David Ghant, an employee at the armoured car firm Loomis, Fargo & Co, to make off with almost a ton and a half of cash from the company's warehouse in Charlottesville, North Carolina.

But while Ghant lay low in Mexico, Chambers, 31, and his wife, Michelle, 26, decided to spend, spend, spend.

Neighbours started to scratch their heads when three weeks after the robbery, the couple swapped their mobile home for a \$635,000 mansion in a gated community at a swish country club.

Then they bought a convertible BMW, a Harley-Davidson, a \$10,000 pool table, \$43,000 diamond ring, Rolex watches and \$20,000-worth of Cuban cigars which were ruined because Chambers did

'When he was thrown out he bragged that he would come back and buy the place'

not know he had to put water in the humidifier. She had breast implants, and he turned up at a very ordinary restaurant in a chauffeur-driven limousine. On one night out he left \$900 in tips, and when he argued with his wife in a nightclub and was thrown out, he bragged that he would return and buy the place.

Mrs Chambers even went to the bank with \$200,000 in bills, still neatly bundled in Loomis, Fargo wrappings, and asked how much she could deposit before the bank would report the transaction.

The police were tipped off, and recruited an accomplice of Chambers, who had become frightened after being asked to smuggle a load of cash to the Cayman Islands. Officers swooped after they tracked down Ghant, who had become a target of a Chambers murder plot. Seventeen people are now awaiting sentence.

Deputy marshal Steve Gladden said the stupidity of the robbers was astonishing. 'Let's face it, you're moving from a trailer in a field in a remote county to the country club. It was very much the Beverly Hillbillies.'



Evan Slater suffers a fall while defying waves up to 30ft in the ultimate test of nerve in the surfing contest at Mavericks, near Half Moon Bay, northern California

Surfers fall for \$15,000

Los Angeles Twenty surfers known for their ability to ride waves the height of three-storey houses competed for hard cash off one of the world's most dangerous beaches. The winter took home \$10,000 (£5,500), and a \$5,000 bonus for pulling off a stunt most surfers only ever manage by accident — a vertical free-fall (Giles Whittell writes).

Darryl Virostko, 27, executed a perfect "airdrop" on the front face of a 30ft swell as it rolled towards the northern Californian coast. The manoeuvre required him to lose contact with his board, land safely on it again and surf away without being dashed on the rocks.

The contest on Wednesday was the first one-day invitational to be held at Mavericks, a legendary break hidden from the coast road by a windswept promontory a short drive south of San Francisco.

INTERNET
<http://www.surfer.com> — website for Surfer magazine.
<http://www.surfers.com/usa/surfers2.html> — Surfers Environmental Alliance website USA.
<http://www.surfers.org/> — official website for British Surfing news.

Black's belated pardon

President to clear 19th-century victim of army racism, writes Ian Brodie in Washington

A BLACK American hero who fell victim to racism more than a century ago will be exonerated at the White House today.

President Clinton will grant a posthumous pardon to Henry Flipper, who was born a slave before the Civil War. With enormous perseverance in the face of racial hostility, he became the first black to graduate with an army commission from West Point, only to be accused falsely of theft.

Lieutenant Flipper's descendants and others who have fought to clear his name will attend the ceremony. His triumph over adversity has been an inspiration to other blacks. General Colin Powell kept a portrait of Flipper on the wall of his Pentagon office while serving as America's top military officer. At West Point, there is an annual Henry Flipper award for the cadet showing the greatest courage and deter-

mation in the face of overwhelming odds. However, the recognition and respect now shown for Flipper did not take root until well after his death in 1940 at the age of 84.

At West Point, he was ostracised by white cadets. After graduation, he commanded black frontier troops, known as Buffalo Soldiers, with distinction.

Then, disastrously, he was charged by white cadets. After graduation, he commanded black frontier troops, known as Buffalo Soldiers, with distinction.

He was almost certainly framed by white officers who openly hated him and wanted to punish him for his friendship with a white woman who was his riding companion. At his court

martial, Flipper was cleared of theft but found guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer for allegedly lying to his commanding officer and trying to cover up the missing money. His military career ended in disgrace with a dishonourable discharge.

As a civilian, Flipper prospered. He was a mining engineer and an accomplished linguist who translated complex documents relating to Spanish land grants. He became a newspaper editor, an assistant to the Secretary of the Interior and an essayist with surprisingly conservative views. But his lifelong efforts to remove the stain on his record were unavailing and he was buried in an unmarked grave in Atlanta.

ta. The army did not yield until 1976, when his discharge was upgraded to honourable, but his conviction was not overturned.

His body was exhumed and moved to his home town of Thomasville in Georgia, where he was buried with military honours and last December a post office was named after him. There is talk now of moving him again this time to Arlington National Cemetery.

Mr Clinton has chosen to honour Flipper during Black History Month, when schools across America focus on both the familiar and little-known struggles against discrimination in the nation's past. Scholars believe it is the first time any presidential pardon has been granted posthumously.

Tom Cramar, a historian who researched the case, said: "Finally an ugly scar has been removed from our national record."



Flipper: General Colin Powell saw him as inspiration

French court orders return of fugitive killer to US

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS

IRA EINHORN, the hippy guru convicted of murdering his girlfriend in 1977, should be extradited to the United States to face a retrial. A French court ruled yesterday.

But lawyers for Einhorn, 57, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in absentia in 1993, said they would launch an appeal to the French Supreme Court that could delay extradition proceedings for months. Einhorn will remain free while he waits for the appeal after the court in Bordeaux, southwest France.

refused to remand him in custody.

Even if the Supreme Court ruling goes against him, he can ask the Prime Minister to refuse extradition. "I know he will try to escape again," said Mary Maddux, the sister of Helen Maddux, whose decomposed body was found in Einhorn's Philadelphia flat 22 years ago. "But the world is going to be very small for him now. Wherever he goes, there will be someone who will recognise him."

The Bordeaux court linked its ruling to the condition that Einhorn be granted a new and fair trial in America. Un-



Einhorn yesterday fled US after murder trial

Driver accused of strangling Italian princess's husband

BY GABRIELLA GAMINI

POLICE in Mexico are questioning a family chauffeur in a murder inquiry launched after the Argentinian husband of an Italian princess was found naked and strangled in his villa in the central state of Morelos.

The body of Reina Corbalan, 60, the husband of Princess Maria Beatrice of Savoy and son-in-law of Italy's last King, and a former UN diplomat, was discovered by the gardener at the couple's home in Cuernavaca, 55 miles outside Mexico City.

After ruling out suicide as a

possibility, prosecutors ordered the arrest of the victim's chauffeur, Juan Manuel Barreiro Pina, who is accused of murdering his employer.

The chief prosecutor, Jose Castillo Pombo, said that the motive for the crime was unclear, but the authorities have stopped looking for other suspects or accomplices.

Señor Corbalan, who was also a law lecturer at the University of the State of Morelos, had a son and daughter with Princess Beatrice.

The Princess's father, the former King Umberto II, was the last Italian monarch; he was forced from the throne

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Will the British ever learn how to loosen up?

The growing trend of dressing down on Friday leaves many workers wondering what to wear. Nick Foulkes ponders the problem

The cult of casualness has struck deep into our national psyche with the arrival of the dress-down Friday.

Reactionaries view the concept as further evidence of the dumbing-down of our cultural life. Progressives welcome dressing down as a vital part of the on-message way of life. For them it is part of a long-overdue loosening-up of the British way – an integral piece of the “Hi, call me Tony” approach.

I do not like dress-down Friday. I find it condescending. Rather than encouraging individuality, it confirms the patronising notion that an employee is only what he or she wears.

While it may purport to free the individual and initiate a more relaxed corporate culture, this is just pop-psychological eyewash, peddled by the paperback prophets of our people-management-made-easy corporate age, where people talk of interpersonal skills rather than getting on with each other. The mandatory wearing of chinos and polo shirts to mark a Friday is just as restrictive as any other orthodoxy.

It is an American import that has been grafted on to British life without any thought. We winge at interference from Brussels: had dress-down Friday been an EU directive, we would have made a national stand against it completely with jingoistic tabloid headlines. However, coming as it does from across the Atlantic, it is just another chunk of American cultural hegemony that we have allowed ourselves to swallow whole.

The British are not good at dressing down. For many

The key to the look is to make more effort not less



American import: dress-down Friday confirms the patronising notion that an employee is only what he or she wears

been in operation for longer; the practice with senior executives is a blazer or sports coat and slacks rather than jeans and sweatshirts. Thus with the establishment of a tertiary wardrobe comes the inevitable arrival of another, more subtle sartorial hierarchy, of the kind that dress-down Friday was in-

tended to sweep away. Perhaps it is time for the return of the saxy suit. Relaxed without being slovenly, the saxy was the interwar suit par excellence. At its best it captures the insouciant elegance of the Duke of Windsor, a man who can hardly ever have been accused of putting in a hard day

at the office. “The old practice here was for customers to come to town on a Friday in a saxy suit, a cloth that is akin to a flannel,” says Lishak. “An alternative was a cheviot, a kind of cross between a full tweed and a worsted suitting. Customers would wear these up to town on a Friday so they

were properly attired when they went down to the country.”

It is doubtless with an eye to

establishing a dress-down Friday uniform for today’s elite that Lishak has introduced a range of checked tweeds to mark Huntsman’s 150th anniversary this year. Although they look like heavy shooting tweeds, they are in fact 14oz cloths, not far from the weight of many standard suitings.

It is folly to pretend that life

is not loosening up, even at

Huntsman. Although mem-

bers of staff wear suits (espe-

cially on Fridays), they no longer wear starched collars.

However, it would be nice to

think that we could find a British

way of assimilating dress-

down Friday rather than mim-

icking America.

● Jane Shilling is away.

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If you want to stay ahead, buy *Vogue*



March: The International Collections Issue
OUT NOW

Objects of desire



The main tip is that Sandino is in town during London Fashion Week, at the Francois Neve stand at Liberty from February 25 to February 27. Times readers who book through Liberty on 0171-734 1224 and 2444 0011 will be given a complimentary consultation. The first caller will receive £300 in Neve make-up; second and third callers will receive make-up worth £50.



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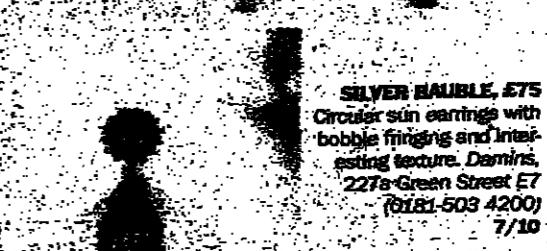
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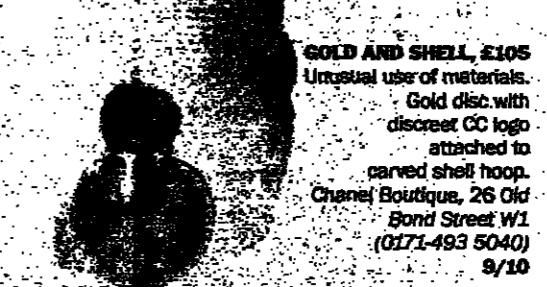


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CHANGING TIMES

A North Sea change for the better

It's time to update Britishness, says Douglas Alexander, MP

In less than 100 days, Scotland will have its first parliament in 300 years. When we were last offered an assembly, in 1979, the majority in favour was narrow and hesitant. By 1997 it had become massive, and confident. This North Sea change has been interpreted by some as the primal reassertion of ancient nationhood, a *Braveheart* flourish. But it is recent British history, as much as old Scottish passions, which has driven the change. Margaret Thatcher is more responsible for devolution than Mel Gibson. It is important that all of us understand this process: for it affects the central question of politics — do we argue over ideas, or clash over identities?

During the 1980s, the great constitutional question became the existence of Scotland within Britain. Could Scottish nationhood, which had survived since 1707, endure when a British Government set about what Scots saw as the systematic undermining of basic Scottish institutions?

It was a debate that split out of the academy and on to the street. The popular Scottish novelist William McIlvaney reflected this mood in 1987, arguing: "If we allow her [Mrs Thatcher] to continue, she will remove from the word Scottish any meaning other than the geographical. We will either defend our identity or lose it."

Those words came to my mind the following year, when I listened as a student to Mrs Thatcher's "Sermon on the Mount". Her address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was intended to connect her beliefs to those of Scots, but it only confirmed her distance. Even in such a Presbyterian setting, my mood would have brightened had I known that, in time, the same building would house the first meeting of a Scottish parliament.

Its establishment is the consequence of a victory for ideas — the modernised left-of-centre values which prevailed at the last election and which seek to empower the citizen through new institutions. But victory for our ideas has seen others, such as the Scottish National Party, attempt to limit politics to the mere assertion of national identity.

Now the central constitutional question has become the future of Britain itself. In the coming elections in Scotland and Wales we must fight to affirm that the values which bind our nations together can triumph over a nationalism that would break us apart.

Arthur Schlesinger has argued that countries break up when they fail to give ethnically diverse peoples compelling reasons to see themselves as part of the same country. In the age of Empire, when Scots enjoyed the prosperity and prospects that came with worldwide opportunities, there was no desire in Scotland to reject everything that was British. In the first half of this century, when Britain was united by shared purpose, there was no desire to abandon our loyalty to Britain. We stood together to defeat fascism, and worked together to build a welfare state.

The author, along with Gordon Brown, MP, published *New Scotland, New Britain*, this week for the Smith Institute.

Mary Ann Sieghart is away.

"The notion that English is going to the dogs is no more than defecation by a miniature poodle"

Letters to the Ed are the global e-mail of the scribbling and spluttering classes. The words: "I shall write a letter to *The Times*" still rise bubbling to the lips, not just of choleric old columnists these days, but of all sorts, colours and sexes of the opinionated, didactic and witty. Thank Hermes, God of Disputation.

But the correspondence that we are running (and running) about the intimations of old age, Evidence of growing older is not merely that editors are looking younger every day. Nor is it that one needs long-handled clippers designed for trimming the edges of lawns in order to cut one's toenails. Nor that the only reason that you still do not need glasses is that you now drink straight out of the bottle. Nor that you puff when climbing the stairs, it is, of course, that you think that

the world is going to the dogs. To think this, you do not have to be of an age at which your birthday cake has become a fire hazard. Young fogeys still in their teens make a good living and pull the birds by pretending to believe it. And it may even be true of some things, such as the London Underground, English cricket/football/rugby/athletics and the Olympic movement, all of which have within living memory deteriorated from fine institutions to bad jokes. But the notion that English is going to the dogs is no more than defecation by a miniature poodle.

The miniature turn your back on such crap, she does a poodle. And the notion that the young cannot speak or write properly any more is another wooden-headed language myth.

Members of the history society of New Hall, Cambridge (Queen of the Colleges), whom I had the

honour to address this week, speak and write far better and more entertainingly than we did at their age. They also do it with more flair. Perhaps they cannot spell "eschscholtz" and "diarrhoea" without pausing for a flicker of thought. [NB Fiona, please make sure that we spell these correctly].

But spelling is a trivial, mechanical accomplishment. If Cambridge is really so concerned about the alleged decline of undergraduate literacy, it should introduce a spelling exam into the Tripos. But I bet that it won't. The complaints that English is going to the dogs from some mythical Golden Age have been made since at least the 17th century. Jonathan Swift, like

some modern reactionary doomsayers, connected the doggishness with the immorality of the young. "Lasciviousness which entered with the Restoration" had infected our morals and corrupted our language. But by any objective measurement standards of English have improved. In 1850 in England and Wales 31 per cent of bridegrooms and 46 per cent of brides could not write their names in the marriage register. Now all the young get a secondary education, and a third of the relevant age-group get a tertiary education.

May they not be all Shakespeares. And of course I was meeting an academic elite at New Hall. But those who com-

plain that the young are taking English to the dogs are either snobbish (concerned about the spread of vulgar "working-class" accents, ie not cut-crystal Yaah drawls), or they are frightened of change and jealous of the young.

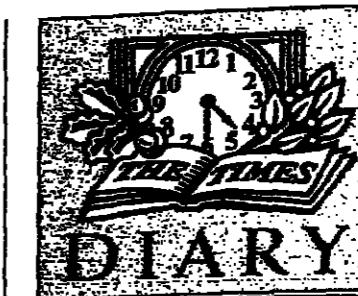
They are also unkind to dogs. Shakespeare is responsible, I think, for this slander on silly woofers. I think that he was (predictably and sensibly) a cat lover. You may believe that Shakespeare was anything you want, and find evidence for it in his work. Rosalind, Othello and Macbeth provide the first examples in English of the metaphor that throwing something to the dogs is to rubish it. Homer and the New Testament have kinder images of dogs as friends of man. Dogs in literature were originally scavengers. Until Argos, the ancient hound of Odysseus. He

is the first creature to recognise his master back from the war after 20 years. He wags his tail and dies. Tears to eyes.

Shakespeare in Love, which is a good film, in spite of being nominated for Oscars, makes this connection, as well as many others. A cat has a pad-on role, along with John Webster, who was much obsessed with death.

Shakespeare hated dogs. Perhaps he was bitten as a Stratford boy. Some other unhappy encounter may explain his fondness for the anti-canine metaphor that things are going to the dogs. But in his working life he was traduced for over-writing, literary flatulence, vulgar scribbling and destroying the language in order to show off. He was on the side of those who know that language changes for each generation. He would have loved New Hall. But he was unsound on dogs.

Philip Howard



Armed livery

ONCE it was said that anything one desired, one could buy at Harrods. Now Mohamed Al Fayed seems intent on making this a reality by going into the arms trade.

He is expanding his empire by registering the Harrods trademark with the European Union. Included in the list of services and products upon which he wishes to guarantee his intellectual property are side arms, firearms, ammunition, projectiles and explosives.

"We are clean out of armaments," says Laurie Meyer, Mo's helper. "But we have to draw the line: we are not about to start stocking tanks in Harrods livery."

• ROUGH being royal, what with parties, palaces, and Civil Lists. "I've been brought up to believe life isn't fair," says the Princess Royal.

Fit for office

JACK STRAW's enthusiasm for confronting "yobs" may have been inspired by a new fitness regime that is seeing him spend longer at the Westminster gym. So regularly does he toil with treadmills, bikes, weights and "boxercise to music" classes, that the Home Secretary has been awarded "bronze" in the club's table of dedicated members, just a couple of puffs behind the retiring Paddy Ashdown.

• HARD shoulder rather than off the shoulder for relatively Posh Spice, Victoria Adams (below). The singer has had a spot of engine



trouble on the A1. She was cruising with her Mum in the family Porsche when it broke down and had to be towed away. An AA type said: "I thought Posh was pretty, but her mother's even nicer."

Waiting game

THE hospital which received the PM's seal of approval recently has been less hospitable to one of his MPs. Lindsay Hoyle had hopped to St Thomas's with a broken leg after hearing his master's praise.

He was told to expect a three-hour wait, so he drove 200 miles to a hospital in his Chorley constituency. "It was quicker to drive four hours up North where I was treated in an hour," says Hoyle. "I was home in bed by midnight."



• OXFORD University Press has a novel excuse for the demise of its poetry list. Keith Thomas, the chairman of its finance committee, has explained that scholars no longer have time to write dry tracts as they do not afford servants and must do their own domestic chores.

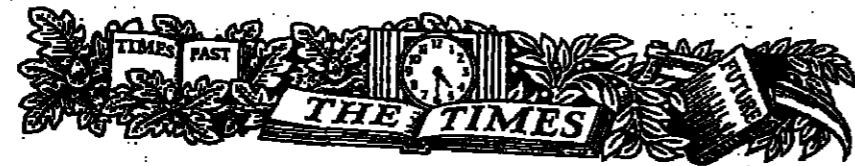
Police video

SHOTS of the Royal Family off-duty are to be aired courtesy of the police. *The Unseen Royal Family*, scheduled by ITV to grace our television receivers in April, will show film taken by rovers who guarded the family.

Local royal guardians have responded to HTV advertisements in police journals seeking "an insight into the family's most intimate moments". Royals, surprised that there are any "intimate moments" left, are alarmed. "We have offered factual help, but no more than that," mutters Buckingham Palace.

• TO Quentin Crisp's memorial service with his "pushers" (wheelchair helpers) and, as his nephew Bamber Gascoigne noted, a sequence of attractive "aunts". They recalled a trip in a Mini with Sandie Shaw, Mick Jagger and Lord Snowdon. Just how many celebrities can you fit into a Mini?

JASPER GERARD



FOOD WARS

The other risks from the GM fiasco

Governments need stiff resolve when faced with any food or health scare. Impetuous action to satisfy public alarm can have disastrous, long-term consequences. The current furore over genetically modified (GM) crops and food is no different. Bending to public concern by placing a moratorium on their commercial growth or sale, as green activists wish, could have disastrous ramifications for prosperity and world trade. The letter published yesterday by five Cabinet Ministers displays an awareness of the potential benefits GM technology can bring, but its release into an environment already affected by hysteria does not bode well for progress.

The different reception that GM foods have received in America and Europe could hardly be more marked. More than 12 million hectares of GM crops were planted in America in 1997. By next year, this area may have tripled. With a fifth of all their corn and half their soya being genetically modified, Americans appear to believe the assurances of the Food and Drug Administration that GM crops are safe to eat.

The first to benefit have been American farmers, whose yields of soya have increased by up to 5 per cent, while using less herbicide. Next is American industry itself, making money researching genetically engineered seeds, the market for which will be worth an estimated \$6 billion by 2005. The most crucial beneficiaries are consumers, who might soon be offered healthier and longer-lasting food at potentially lower prices.

Europe's populations prefer to look on the dark side of GM crops and food. Public caution of something "new", official scepti-

cism of the American research, and the European Union's antiquated system for regulating food safety threaten to hobble Europe's progress, marginalise farmers by denying them high-productivity GM crops, and deprive consumers of possible benefits. Austria, France and Luxembourg have already blocked the commercial growth of certain GM crops. The European Commission may challenge at least one of these decisions as an impediment to free trade.

Yet the Commission needs to respond with care. If it acts too heavy-handedly, an anti-GM food alliance could soon form among member states, undermining the Commission's authority and the single market. If it fails to act at all, tacitly giving its approval to the contravention of EU law, a bandwagon against GM food and crops could soon begin to roll. If European countries banned GM products without proving they are unsafe, the World Trade Organisation, backed by America's muscle, is bound to object. A dispute among scientists could become a trade war.

Other countries share Europe's ostrich-like approach to GM food and crops. Developing countries want the Biosafety Protocol, being negotiated this week in Colombia, to allow nations to ban or restrict import of GM organisms, ranging from pest-resistant corns and potatoes through to advanced pharmaceuticals and blue jeans (made from GM cotton). Yet these are the very countries which have so much to gain from genetic modification.

The development of GM crops has been unsettling. The seeds of mistrust have been sown in foreign and English fields. Ministers must be sensitive, but they should not bend too much with the wind.

KURDS IN GREECE

Athens pays the price of unreason

Nowhere has the Ocalan affair had a more devastating impact than in Greece. Across Europe, Greek embassies have been ransacked. Greek diplomats have been threatened by Kurdish demonstrators in more than 20 cities. Greece has been made to look both ludicrous and mendacious for its bungled attempt to shelter the PKK Kurdish leader while repeatedly denying that it was doing anything to help him. And now the Greek Government has paid a heavy price, with the resignation of Theodoros Pangalos, the Foreign Minister, and the Ministers of the Interior and Public Order, Costas Simitis, the Prime Minister, has been badly damaged, and the affair may lead to his removal.

Greece has brought this catastrophe on its own head. Its support for Abdullah Ocalan is a result of short-sighted policies that are guided more by emotion than reason and that have often cost the country so dear. Suspicion of Turkey and hostility to whatever government holds office in Ankara have long been the main issues determining policy in Athens: the old Greek words *mysteria* and *paranoia* aptly characterise the relationship. The Kurdish revolt was seen by some politicians as a way of tying down the Turkish Army, an important aim in the confrontations with Ankara over the Aegean and Cyprus. And Mr Ocalan, the leader of the revolt, was therefore hailed as a hero who was not only battling against Turkish oppression but also serving a useful political purpose.

Acting on the principle of "my enemy's enemy is my friend" may win votes, but it makes for poor statesmanship. Greece knew that open backing of the PKK was a provocation that could trigger an incalcula-

ble Turkish response, and Mr Simitis steered a careful course between support for Kurdish aspirations and caution in not endorsing PKK violence. But the murky involvement of the Greek Ambassador to Kenya, the attempt to give refuge to Mr Ocalan and the use of forged passports and diplomatic subterfuge have ruined this policy. Greece now stands accused of the very kind of backing for terrorism that it would be swift to denounce from any fellow European Union member.

Mr Pangalos, a political heavyweight often too outspoken for ministerial office, had to go. So, probably, did the others who resigned. But although Mr Simitis called for their departures, this does not lessen the pressure on him, from both Left and Right. Senior Pasok politicians, who dreamt of inheriting the Papandreu crown, have never forgiven Mr Simitis — not only for beating them to the premiership but for betraying the crusty, nationalist, idiosyncratic Papandreu legacy. They see him as a Major diluting the Thatcher revolution. They mask their left-wing animus under the guise of defending Greek national interests, a populist cause embraced also by the opposition Right.

The isolation of Mr Simitis is bad for Greece. A pragmatist and moderate, he needs domestic as well as foreign support to try to steer his country and party into policies for the next century. A ray of good news is his appointment of George Papandreu, son of the former Prime Minister, to succeed Mr Pangalos. He is one of the most moderate and intelligent men in the Cabinet. But it will be hard for both of them to restore Greek pride and voter confidence after the Ocalan fiasco.

WAR IN THE HORN

Neither Ethiopia nor Eritrea can win a military victory

Last summer the world was baffled by a brief, intense war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Months of fitful peace and unproductive negotiation followed. Two weeks ago the war flared again. Yesterday a troika of EU ambassadors arrived in the Horn of Africa to add impetus to efforts to end hostilities. They deserve our sympathy and support. The belligerents' accusations and counter-accusations have combined with limited press access to create an extraordinarily confused situation where little is clear other than the fact of the violence itself. There is a basis for a ceasefire — an 11-point plan drawn up by the Organisation for African Unity, based on American and Rwandan mediatory proposals made last summer, with EU and UN Security Council backing. But Eritrea will not implement it; and while one party is so dogmatically opposed, the process cannot prosper.

The sticking point is the plan's stipulation that Eritrean troops must withdraw from disputed territory. The land is Eritrean, says Asmara; sovereignty must be decided before any withdrawal, which would leave its people subject to the authority of a state which expels Eritrean migrants and has unilaterally broken the American-brokered moratorium on air attacks. Addis Ababa, meanwhile, claims Asmara mounted a premeditated invasion which no settlement should recognise. A return to the *status quo ante* — Ethiopian administration and no Eritrean military presence — is the only option. Though the factual bases of their respective positions may be impossible to verify, the positions themselves are clearly incompatible. And

each side is too proud to back down. Yet the fact that much of the fighting has been on undisputed territory shows that the border dispute is the symptom, not the cause. Eritrea is a proud, prickly, highly militarised society, quick to overreact to any perceived slight, which has fought each of its neighbours since independence in 1993, and undoubtedly resents Ethiopia's faster economic growth. Ethiopia, on the other hand, is overly sensitive because the contested territory is in Tigre — the symbolic province of Aksum and Adowa, and the home of the core of President Meles Zenawi's Tigrean People's Liberation Front-based Government.

Its underlying fear is denial of access to the Red Sea. It renounced a coastline by giving Eritrea independence, assuming a friendly Asmara; when the latter introduced its currency, it threatened to move outside Addis Ababa's control. President Zenawi's subsequent overreaction created the tension which fanned last summer's border dispute. That same fear may be behind its recent bombing of Assab's water supply, destruction of which would render the exposed Red Sea port vulnerable to a siege. The war may yet escalate.

Victory is impossible. Neither side is likely to shift positions on the OAU plan without substantial external pressure. Both countries are poor. Perhaps the best that the EU troika can hope for is to try to find a different basis for a ceasefire, with acceptance encouraged by the judicious application of financial sticks. Only when the two sides persuade themselves — or are persuaded — that peace is in their interests will the guns fall silent.

Ethical and social questions raised by GM crops

From Professor Ian Kennedy,
Chairman of the Nuffield
Council on Bioethics

Sir, Fourteen months ago this council invited Professor Alan Ryan, the distinguished Oxford philosopher, to chair a working party to consider the ethical and social implications of developments in genetically modified crops. The report of this working party is now near completion and the council will publish it in May. It will address such issues as food safety, the environment, biodiversity, commercialisation, consumer choice, regulation and the interests and needs of developing countries. It will contain recommendations for policymakers.

The intensity of the debate about genetically modified food (GM) makes it clear that the complex issues about its implications require careful evaluation and illustrates the dangers of judgements being hastily made in the glare of publicity. For the public, trying to reconcile or balance the viewpoints of industry, environmentalists and government under these conditions is an almost impossible task. We hope that our report will provide that careful evaluation.

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics is independent. This is important. The current debate on GM suggests that the public wants impartial analysis and advice in which it can have confidence. Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust, the council produces searching, widely disseminated reports on questions raised by advances in biology and biomedicine.

Our experience suggests that these can make a more helpful and lasting contribution to informing the public and developing public policy than the present stream of instant, and often untemperate comment.

Yours faithfully,
IAN KENNEDY,
Chairman,
Nuffield Council on Bioethics,
28 Bedford Square, WC1B 3EG.
February 17.

Tories and compassion

From Mr Oliver Kamm

Sir, Your report (February 16) that William Hague is determined to "reach out" and to "recapture from the Left the words like caring, like compassion", nicely illustrates the intellectual confusion that characterises the modern Conservative Party.

Compassion is among the most desirable of personal virtues and dangerous of political affectations. The task of government is not to assuage emotional pain; it is to set disinterestedly the rules we live by. Economic redistribution is justified, indeed necessary, in the extent that it enables citizens to exercise autonomous choices within that framework of rules. That is not compassion; it is equity.

Among the reasons for the Left's electoral recovery has been its eventual realisation that government has a limit, as well as a role, in promoting that end. Mr Hague is apparently determined to forget the same point.

Yours faithfully,
OLIVER KAMM,
39 Calthorpe Street, WC1X 0JX.
February 16.

Fox in distress

From Ms Sharon Kyrke-Smith

Sir, Richard Edwards, the vet, may well have found himself with a very stressed fox which had been rescued after a hunt (report, February 17), but may I suggest that for a wild animal, which had never had any human contact, to be bundled up and driven to his surgery might well have been the principal cause of a racing heart, no colour in its gums and blood in its urine".

I remain, Sir, yours faithfully,
SHARON KYRKE-SMITH,
197 Grove Lane, SES 8BP.
February 17.

From Mr Clifford Chatterton

Sir, Now we are provided with information that foxes can have stress when hunted, should not we also be advised what chickens feel like when foxes raid their pens?

Yours faithfully,
CLIFFORD CHATTERTON,
608 Lambton Lane,
Berkshire Lakes,
Naples, Florida 34104.
February 17.

Hot on the trail

From Mr R. E. Hurst

Sir, Lord Rees-Mogg, writing today about the Clinton case, says of Kenneth Starr that "he was trotting like a bloodhound with double cataracts, after a red herring".

Come back Sam Goldwyn — all is forgiven.

Yours sincerely,
R. E. HURST,
20 Esk Gardens,
Wetherby LS22 7UR.
February 15.

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

From Professor Thomas Lehner
and Dr Julian Ma

Sir, Publicity about genetically modified food should not be confused with the technology utilised for medical purposes.

There is extensive published evidence that plants can be genetically modified to produce a variety of vaccines and antibodies that will prevent bacterial or viral infections. Those investigations are carried out under strictly controlled laboratory conditions and they are seen as one of the most promising future developments in controlling microbial disease.

In this country, Europe, the US and Japan vaccines administered by mouth have priority over injection. This will be achieved either by oral administration of a vaccine produced in genetically modified edible plants (for example, bananas, tomatoes, etc), or by using purified extracts from suitable plants.

Transgenic plants are being studied to generate preventive vaccines in common infections, such as hepatitis, dental caries, AIDS and diarrhoea, to mention only a few. The benefit of low-cost, easy storage and simple mode of administration is self-evident in making vaccines readily available to all, especially in developing countries, and eliminating the fear of the needle.

The public needs to be aware of the immense benefits that derive from the medicinal application of transgenic plant biotechnology in preventing infectious diseases, which are the most common causes of mortality and morbidity.

Yours faithfully,
THOMAS LEHNER,
JULIAN MA,
Guy's, King's and
St Thomas' Hospital
Medical and Dental School,
London Bridge, SE1 9RT.
thomas.lehner@kcl.ac.uk
February 18.

From Dr A. M. Monroe

Sir, Your report of February 8, headed "Public seems advice over food safety", highlights the ironic paradox of trying to impart the best scientific knowledge (whether endorsed by the Government or not) on health matters to the public at large.

While nearly one third of the population persists in smoking itself into chronic illness and an early death (despite the strongest recommendations against the use of tobacco), what hope can there be that the population will pay more attention to advice on the true risks associated with consumption of various foods?

The accompanying report, "Health fears may be overdone", correctly suggests that most health hazards from food arise from campylobacter, salmonella and *E. coli* and that eating

Yours faithfully,
ALASTAIR MONRO,
Wisteria House,
Coombe Lane, Ash,
Kent CT3 2BS.
February 9.

Heeding health risks

From Dr A. M. Monroe

Sir, Your report of February 8, headed "Public seems advice over food safety", highlights the ironic paradox of trying to impart the best scientific knowledge (whether endorsed by the Government or not) on health matters to the public at large.

This would have the effect of reducing the price of these foodstuffs and anything that can be done to encourage an increased consumption of them would have indisputable major health benefits in the prevention of cancer and other age-related diseases. All this is well documented in the scientific and medical literature.

Yours faithfully,
ALASTAIR MONRO,
Wisteria House,
Coombe Lane, Ash,
Kent CT3 2BS.
February 12.

From Mr Denis Dooley, FRCS

Sir, I understand that the proposed inspectors of doctors' performance will be expected to listen to "whistle-blowers". May I suggest that encouragement should also be given to members of the public to record and inform the inspecting authority of the excellent work done by individual GPs, consultants and nurses from day to day. We might call these people "trumpet-blowers".

Sincerely,
DENIS DOOLEY,
7 Murray Road,
Wimbledon, SW19 4PD.
February 12.

From Mr Peter Wade

Sir, Competence tests for doctors. Will this include handwriting?

Yours faithfully,
PETER WADE,
12 Bell Close,
Colchester, Essex CO2 8EP.
February 11.

Doing penance

From Mr Mike Prymaka

Sir, Lack of any mention of pancakes in *The Times* on Shrove Tuesday reminded me of a comment in the regimental mess suggestions book on this day many years ago: "Since our cooks have chosen not to celebrate Shrove Tuesday in traditional style, may we request that they similarly ignore Ash Wednesday?"

Yours faithfully,
MIKE PRYMAKA,
The Yews,
Cootes Lane, Fen Drayton,
Cambridgeshire CB4 8SL.
prymaka@aol.com
February 16.

Knot rated

From Mr John G. Tate

Sir, Thank you for your letter regretting that you were unable to publish one of mine. As I read it my bow-tie began to wilt. Nevertheless, this does not prevent me from offering hearty congratulations to Professor Ian Fells, who not only started the bow-tie correspondence (February 5), but a few days later (letter, February 10) gave us his interesting thoughts on nuclear power.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN G. TATE,
4 High View,
Hedley on the Hill, Stocksfield,
Northumberland NE43 7TD.
February 13.

True enough

From Mr Bryan Marson-Smith

Sir, A small piece of social history: my grandson, aged just four, pointed to a red roadside telephone kiosk, and observed: "That's where you go if you don't have a mobile."

Yours faithfully,
B. MARSON-SMITH,
Fairseat, Gracious Lane,
Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1TJ.
February 18.

051 271529



COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

February 18: The Queen held an investiture at Buckingham Palace this morning.

By command of The Queen, Vice Admiral Sir James Weatherall (Master of the Diplomatic Corps) called upon His Excellency Mr. Vassili S. Zarudny, at 41 Upper Brook Street, London W1, this morning in order to bid farewell to His Excellency upon relinquishing his appointment as Ambassador from Greece.

The Duke of Edinburgh, Colonel-in-Chief, this morning received Major General Michael Heath upon relinquishing his appointment as Colonel Commandant Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and Major General Peter Besgrove upon assuming the appointment Buckingham Palace.

His Royal Highness, President, today held a Lunch for the Council Members and supporters of the National Playing Fields Association at Buckingham Palace.

The Duke of Edinburgh, Patron, this evening, attended the Outward Bound Trust Friends' Reception at Buckingham Palace.

His Royal Highness, Patron, later, attended the Outward Bound Patron's Company Dinner, at St James's Palace.

CLARENCE HOUSE

February 18: Air Commodore E.G. Mackay today had the honour of being received by Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, Commandant-in-Chief Royal Air Force Central Flying School, upon relinquishing his appointment as Commandant.

Air Commodore M. Prisk had the honour of being received by Her Majesty upon assuming his appointment as Commandant of the Royal Air Force Central Flying School.

ST JAMES'S PALACE

February 18: The Duke of Kent, Colonel-in-Chief, today received Lieutenant-Colonel Gary Case on relinquishing command and Lieutenant-Colonel James Murray-Payfair, MBE, as commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

His Royal Highness, Patron, the Hanover Band, this evening attended a concert at St John's Church, Queen Square, London W1, today.

THATCHED HOUSE LODGE

February 18: Princess Alexandra, President, this morning visited the Imperial Cancer Research Fund Shop at 36 Eden Street, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey.

Her Royal Highness, Patron of the Digestive Disorders Foundation, this afternoon received Professor John Leonard-Smith, President, and Dr Richard Thompson, Head of the Medical Household.

Princess Alexandra, Patron of Guidepost Trust, subsequently received Mr Robert Elmore, Chairman, and Mr Clifford Upex, Director.

Today's royal engagements

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh will attend a reception given by the American Chamber of Commerce in London, at noon.

The Duke of Edinburgh will visit Phoenix, Ormed, Surrey, at 2.20.

The Princess Royal, as president, the Rural Housing Trust, will visit Cedar's View, East Tytherley, Salisbury and Steven's Drive, Houghton, Sandringham, Hampshire, at 10.35, as part of National Association of Victims Support Schemes, will attend the Great North Ride event at The Guildhall, Broadway, Winchester, at 12.35.

will open the new unit at Florence Portal House, Royal Hampshire County Hospital, Romsey Road, Winchester, at 1.30, and as patron, the Butler Trust, will visit HM Prison Winchester, Roxbury Road, Winchester, at 2.25.

Appointment

Churches Conservation Trust

Mr Richard Bevan Butt has been appointed a Member of the Churches Conservation Trust for three years from April 1, in succession to Mr Peter Rumble.

Service dinners

University of London OTC
Mr Douglas Henderson, Minister for the Armed Forces, was the principal guest and speaker at the annual dinner of the University of London Officers' Training Corps held last night at Yeovil House, London, Lieutenant-Colonel N.M. Holland presided.

Manchester & Salford Universities Air Squadron
Air Vice-Marshal B.K. Burridge, Air Officer Commanding 118th Group RAF, was the guest of honour at the annual dinner of the Manchester & Salford Universities Air Squadron held last night at RAF Woodvale, Squadron Leader R.J. Pickering was in the chair.

Dinners
British Academy of Forensic Sciences

Lord Mackay of Clashfern, KT, presided at the friends' dinner of the British Academy of Forensic Sciences held last night at the Law Society. Mr Anthony Glass, QC, and Mr Jeremy Roberts, QC, also spoke.

European Atlantic Group
Mr Christopher Cox, Chairman of the House Policy Committee of the American Congress, was the guest speaker at a dinner of the European Atlantic Group held last night at the St James's Court Hotel, London SW1. Lord Judd of Tonset, chairman, presided. Dr Lind Gilbert and Lord McVair also spoke.

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BUCKINGHAM PALACE
February 18: The Princess Royal

Birthdays today

The Duke of York celebrates his 39th birthday today.

Mr Peter Baldwin, former chief executive, Radio Authority, 72; Sir John Colver, engineer, 72; the Rev Dr G. Henson Davies, Principal Emeritus, Egerton Park College, Oxford, 93; Sir Nicholas Renn, diplomat, 63; Lord Forbes, St. John Freeman, former MP, diplomat and chairman, London Television, 64; Lord Harteker, 63; Dr Robin Jeffrey, deputy chairman, 57; Professor Bernard Meadows, professor, 54; Dr Alan J. Munro, Master, Christ's College, Cambridge, 62; Sir Nigel Nichols, former Clerk of the Privy Council, 61; Sir Daniel Piniti, former chairman, National Freight Corporation, 54; Mrs Erin Pizay, author and founder of first shelter for battered wives, 60; Mr Peter Price, former MEP, 57; Mr Smokey Robinson, singer, 59; Mr Colin Sharman, international chairman, KPMG, 56; Miss Gwen Taylor, actress, 60; Mr Brian Tesler, former deputy chairman, LWT (Holdings), 70.

Oxford

Niall Alan McCulloch (Law) formerly of Dundee University, Scotland has been elected to a scholarship.

Sarah Florence Watson (Law)

formerly of Dumfries Academy, Scotland has been elected to an exhibition.

Somerville College

The following elections have been made:

To a Coombes Scholarship in Modern History: Emma Louise Furniss (from Tertiary College, 37; Professor Bernard Meadows, professor, 54; Dr Alan J. Munro, Master, Christ's College, Cambridge, 62; Sir Nigel Nichols, former Clerk of the Privy Council, 61; Sir Daniel Piniti, former chairman, National Freight Corporation, 54; Mrs Erin Pizay, author and founder of first shelter for battered wives, 60; Mr Peter Price, former MEP, 57; Mr Smokey Robinson, singer, 59; Mr Colin Sharman, international chairman, KPMG, 56; Miss Gwen Taylor, actress, 60; Mr Brian Tesler, former deputy chairman, LWT (Holdings), 70.

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The following have been elected into a Research Fellowship for three years from October 1:

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Treasury's £1bn gain from mis-selling

THE unravelling of the pensions mis-selling scandal is bolstering the Treasury coffers by up to £1 billion. Compensation paid by pensions providers to people rejoining public sector schemes after being mis-sold personal pensions is flowing straight to the Treasury, adding to the surplus in the public accounts.

"This is effectively another windfall tax," claimed Francis

Maude, the Shadow Chancellor, last night. "People will want to know how this money is being used to help their pensions." He will be tabling questions in Parliament demanding that the Treasury discloses the extent of the funds it is gaining this way.

The Bill for settling the first phase of the huge project for compensating victims of mis-selling is already heading to

wards £4 billion and industry sources estimate that at least a quarter of that could go to the Treasury. This is because most of the public sector pension schemes, such as those serving nurses and teachers, are not funded, relying instead on the Government paying the pensions as they arise.

A spokesman at the Government Actuaries Department described the extra inflow of

funds to the Treasury as "a nice little windfall in Gordon Brown's back pocket", estimating that virtually all the compensation from the first phase settlements would land with the Treasury in the current financial year. This week the Government revealed a net surplus of £12.4 billion in the public sector net cash requirement, leading the City to believe that Mr Brown would

have the resources to deliver a relatively generous Budget next month.

The Treasury says it does not have details of how much cash it has received from the pensions providers. However, officials stressed that any compensation paid into public schemes would be fully recouped in future benefits to pensioners. They also pointed out that there would have been an

outflow of funds from the Treasury when public sector workers opted out of their pension schemes and bought private pensions. But those payments would have been spread over several years and would have been very much smaller than the money now being paid in compensation. Bacon & Woodrow, the pensions specialists, estimate that the final cost of settling the pen-

sions mis-selling debacle could be as high as £22 billion although some industry estimates put the figure at half that.

The firm estimates that the eventual benefit to the Treasury could be more than £3 billion. That may be an over-estimate.

So far, the National Health Services fund, for instance, has received only £30 million but many more claims are still being processed.

Halifax offers investors fresh windfall

By CAROLINE MERRELL
BANKING CORRESPONDENT

HALIFAX plans to pay out a total of £1.5 billion to its 3.5 million shareholders.

The latest windfall was promised as the former building society reported that its profits for its first full year as a bank had risen by 7 per cent to £1.76 billion.

However, the profit figure, after millennium costs and a £29 million provision for the pensions mis-selling review, was up only 3 per cent.

A shareholder with 350 shares should get £217 in June, although Halifax admitted that the scheme still needed to be approved by the Inland Revenue.

The bank hopes the payout will be treated as a capital payment by the Revenue, as this will mean most investors will not be liable to pay tax. If it is treated as an extra dividend, it will be subject to income tax.

James Crosby, Halifax's new chief executive, said the capital repayment would form part of the restructuring of the bank into four separate businesses under a new holding company. Under the capital repayment programme, for every 40 shares in Halifax, shareholders will be given 37 shares in the new company plus a payment of 62p a share.

Mr Crosby, who replaced Mike Blackburn at the beginning of the year, also laid out his plans for the bank, which has 21 million customers. Despite the payout, the bank still has excess cash of £15 billion.

Mr Crosby said that he hoped to deploy this within three years, either by returning it to shareholders or through making an acquisition. He said: "Our commitment to acquisition is unaffected by this programme. In no circumstances do we want to destroy the value of the business."

Halifax has acquired Clerical Medical and the Birmingham Midshires, the former building society. Mr Crosby said Halifax was interested in making a number of smaller acquisitions, rather than a big merger.

Halifax's share of net mortgage lending in the second half of the year was 11 per cent, but for the year as a whole it stood at just 5 per cent, reflecting increased competition from new players. Halifax's total market share of mortgages is 20 per cent.

Earnings per share increased by 9 per cent to 47.5p and total dividend was raised by 16 per cent to 20.25p.

Tempus page 30
City Diary, page 31

William Hill forced to cut flotation price

By DOMINIC WALSH

THE recent resurgence of interest in the new issues market was brought crashing to earth yesterday as William Hill, the high street bookmaker, was forced to cut the price of its proposed £90 million flotation.

Warburg Dillon Read, the broker to the listing, was left red-faced after a lack of institutional interest compelled it to cut the offer price to 135p, well below the company's indicative range of 155p to 175p. It is understood that the flotation was very close to being pulled altogether.

The lukewarm response from big investors was in stark contrast to that of the general public, who were invited to apply for at least £1,000 of shares. The four share shops involved in the retail offer received more than 220,000 inquiries, and the number of shares available to small investors had been scaled up from 10 per cent to 20 per cent of the total.

The new flotation price values the bookmaker at £780 million, including debts of £375 million, compared with the £840 million to £900 million range contained in the flotation prospectus — a huge blow to Nomura International, its Japanese owner. The reduction has cut its profit by £90 million, while the bookmaker's top directors, John Brown and Bob Lambert, have seen

their personal windfalls more than halved to a combined £1.4 million.

Sources close to the process suggested last night that an aversion to the profits Nomura would have made on the deal was a big factor. At the middle price indicated by Warburg, Nomura would have made a profit of £170 million on its original investment of £200 million.

One source said: "The institutions were just not prepared to see Nomura turn that sort of profit in the space of just 15 months. This has huge implications for venture capitalists and other equity providers."

David Freud, managing director of Warburg Dillon Read, said recent events had

shown the new issues market to be "extremely fragile".

He pointed out that the share price of South African Breweries, which is moving its main listing to London, had fallen 15 per cent in Johannesburg over the past two weeks, although a spokesman for SAB said the roadshow had received "an encouraging response".

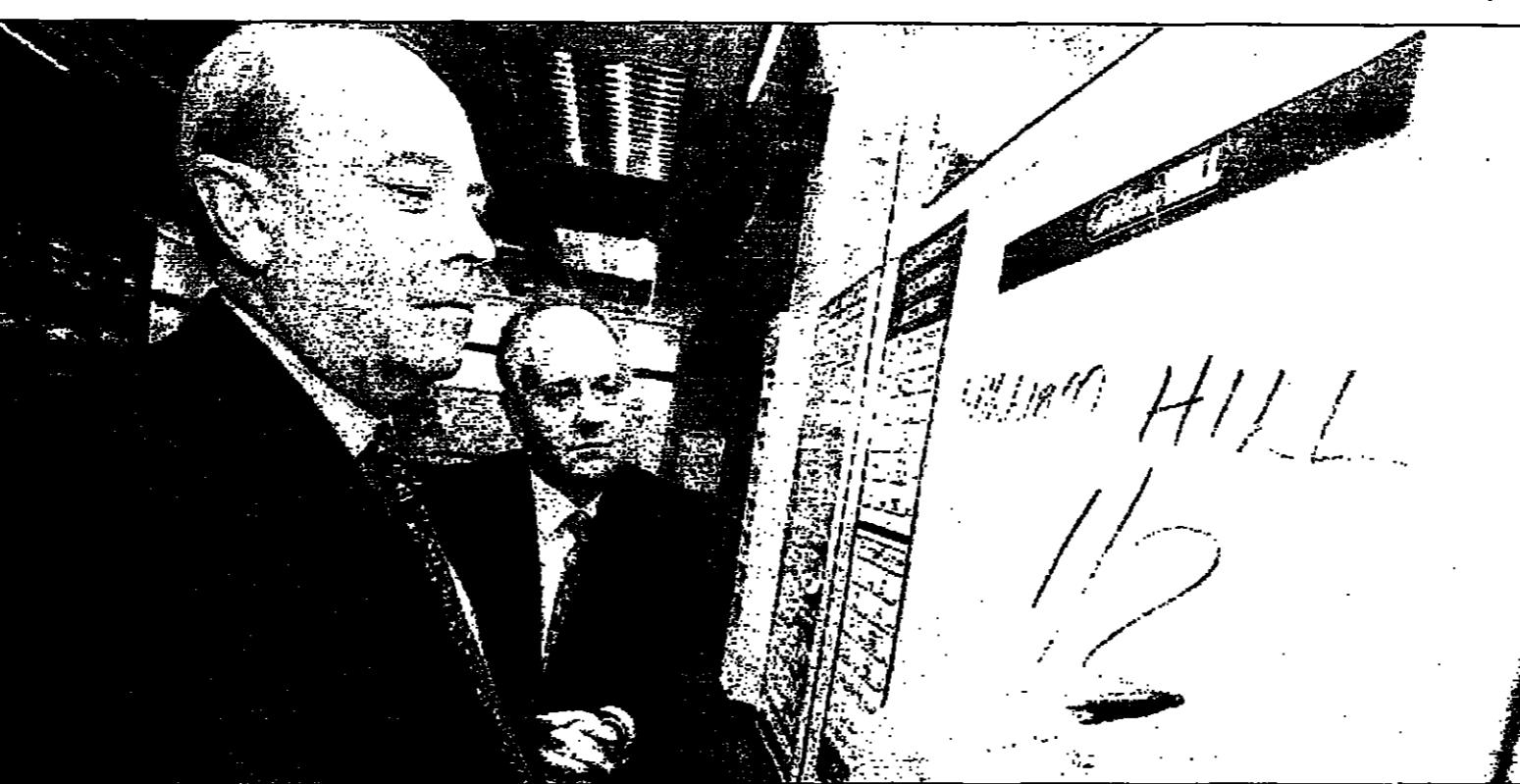
Mr Freud also linked William Hill's predicament to the difficulty of companies outside the FTSE 100 in attracting institutional support. He said: "It is extremely concerning that a good company with a solid management and good track record has struggled like this. It is a concern if the London capital market is not

going to be an efficient source of capital for businesses."

Other sources close to Warburg were more forthright, describing the reaction as "totally irrational". One insider said: "Even at 155p it was impossible to get institutions to see you, let alone discuss the merits of the company. It's all very embarrassing."

Although the shock price cut is a setback for William Hill and its advisers, it could mean tasty profits for those allotted shares when conditional trading starts on February 22. A source close to Warburg said that at the revised price it had experienced no difficulty in finding buyers.

Commentary, page 29



Odds against: John Brown, chief executive, left and Bob Lambert, financial director, who have seen their windfalls halved by the cut in the flotation price

PPP in hospital referrals dispute

By JASON NISSE

PPP, the private healthcare company, faces protests by more than 300 leading consultants in a dispute over hospital referrals.

The London Consultants Association, which represents 300 of the capital's top doctors, has written to PPP and the Office of Fair Trading protesting at PPP's policy of refusing to include many of London's private hospitals on its directory of approved centres. There are only ten Central London hospitals in the directory, four of which are owned by Columbia/PPP, a joint venture in which PPP has a 49 per cent stake.

The OFT will investigate the complaints as part of a wider inquiry into the

provision of private health care in the UK. Doctors claim PPP and Bupa use their power as insurers to gain business.

The latest battle stems from PPP's refusal to include the new £45 million Heart Hospital in Harley Street in its directory. Anthony Rickards, a consultant cardiologist, has said that PPP's stand on the hospital could result in "clinical tragedy". He cited one case where PPP insisted that a patient was transferred to the Harley Street Clinic, a Columbia/PPP hospital, which was unable to treat him.

Adrian Bull, medical director of PPP, rejected the claims that PPP was restricting choice and potentially endangering life.

Arnault to sue Gucci over new shares

By FRASER NELSON

BERNARD ARNAULT, chairman of LVMH, is to sue Gucci in an attempt to prove that the Italian fashion house has illegally created new shares to stop him exerting any power on its board.

After five weeks of building up a 34.4 per cent stake in Gucci, M. Arnault has decided to go hostile — ensuring he can appoint an LVMH-nominated director into its Milan head office.

Domenico De Sole, Gucci chief executive, yesterday created 20 million shares which will be controlled by a separate company trust — commanding a 25.6 per cent stake in his company.

This dilutes LVMH's stake in Gucci from 34.5 per cent to an identical 25.6 per

cent. This means the new trust can cancel any votes cast by LVMH when they decide whether to accept a new director.

Sigmar De Sole said: "M. Arnault wants his director to be the eyes and ears of LVMH in Gucci. If he wants to make a full bid, we will talk to him. But if he does not, we must protect ourselves."

M. Arnault believes that, under its Amsterdam listing laws, Gucci can only create new shares in the "shareholders' interests". He believes it has violated this condition.

LVMH owns a stable of luxury brands including Kenzo and Givenchy.

Unwanted designs, page 31

3i restates interest in Electra

3i, the venture capital investment trust, yesterday reasserted its interest in buying its rival, the Electra Investment Trust (Robert Cole writes).

In a formal statement to the Stock Exchange, 3i confirmed that it had indicated to Electra's board that it was willing to pay 705p a share for the company — or £1.2 billion in total.

It added: "3i remains interested in acquiring Electra, or its assets." A spokesman for Electra criticised the statement because it contained nothing new. He added that the 705p offer was "feeble in the extreme".

3i said that it was waiting for the Electra board to contact it to resume merger talks. However, the Electra spokesman said: "The ball is right at the back of 3i's court. All they need to do is look for it."

Re-affirmation of the takeover interest came a day after Electra proposed a plan to wind itself up, a proposal partly designed to counter 3i's bid.

Commentary page 29

WIDER SEATS
IN BUSINESS CLASS, EVEN IN THE UK.

Rank bullish despite drop in profits

By DOMINIC WALSH

SIR DENYS HENDERSON, the embattled Rank Group chairman, admitted yesterday that it had been a tough year, but rejected suggestions that investors' best hope of recouping their money was a break-up.

Unveiling a big drop in 1998 profits, he conceded that the second half of the year — culminating in Andrew Teare's removal as chief executive with an £870,000 payoff — had been "bloody awful". How-

ever, he claimed that the £2 billion spent over the past three years would "impact positively in 1999".

Last September, in the wake of Mr Teare's resignation, the company received an informal approach from John Garrett, a former director, over a possible £900 million bid for the leisure division, including Odeon cinemas and Tom Cobleigh pubs. But Sir Denys said there had been no further contact from Mr Garrett, adding: "We are not about to do

any fire sales, because that would be absolutely crazy."

Douglas Yates, acting chief executive until Mike Smith arrives in April, also dismissed persistent speculation that credit notes taken out at the time of the sale of its stake in Aerox were a "poison pill", preventing a break-up of Rank. He added that the credit notes, covering deferred payments of £440 million of the £940 million sale price, may be switched to the insurance market. "We believe it could be cheaper for the insur-

ance market to cover this than the banking market," he said.

Yesterday Rank reported a cut in profits before tax and exceptional costs from £303 million to £255 million from turnover up 2.2 per cent to £2.06 billion. Including exceptional costs, pre-tax losses were £51 million, the biggest hit being a £141 million write-off against the value of its US resorts arm, which was put up for sale last year. Mr Yates said that the business, now worth less than £60 million, would probably be sold in "three or four chunks". He added that the recent sale

of 14 nightclubs in the likes of Luminar and Springwood had reaped £20 million so far.

Although all divisions, including holidays, leisure and Hard Rock Café, were badly hit in the second half, Sir Denys said there were "signs of a more positive trading environment" in some businesses. Butlins, benefiting from a £139 million makeover, has seen a 17 per cent rise in forward bookings in value terms.

Tempus, page 30

Glaxo share options 'could cost £900m'

By PAUL DURMAN

GLAXO WELLCOME would be forced to take a charge of at least £900 million in its accounts if the pharmaceuticals group were to follow Boots in recognising the true cost of share options granted to employees.

Boots this week announced plans to acknowledge that the new shares issued to fulfil the exercise of options dilutes the profits available for other shareholders. Buying shares to cover outstanding options could reduce this year's profits by £63 million, it estimated.

With 90 million options in issue with an average price of about £10, and with its shares trading above £20, Glaxo Wellcome would face a much bigger charge. However, John Coombe, finance director, said: "We have no plans to go out into the marketplace and buy those in."

Analysts were strongly impressed with Glaxo Wellcome's results announced yesterday, which showed it shrugging off the loss of £800 million of sales from Zantac and Zovirax, the big-selling drugs that lost their patent protection in 1997.

US ruling lifts Skye share price

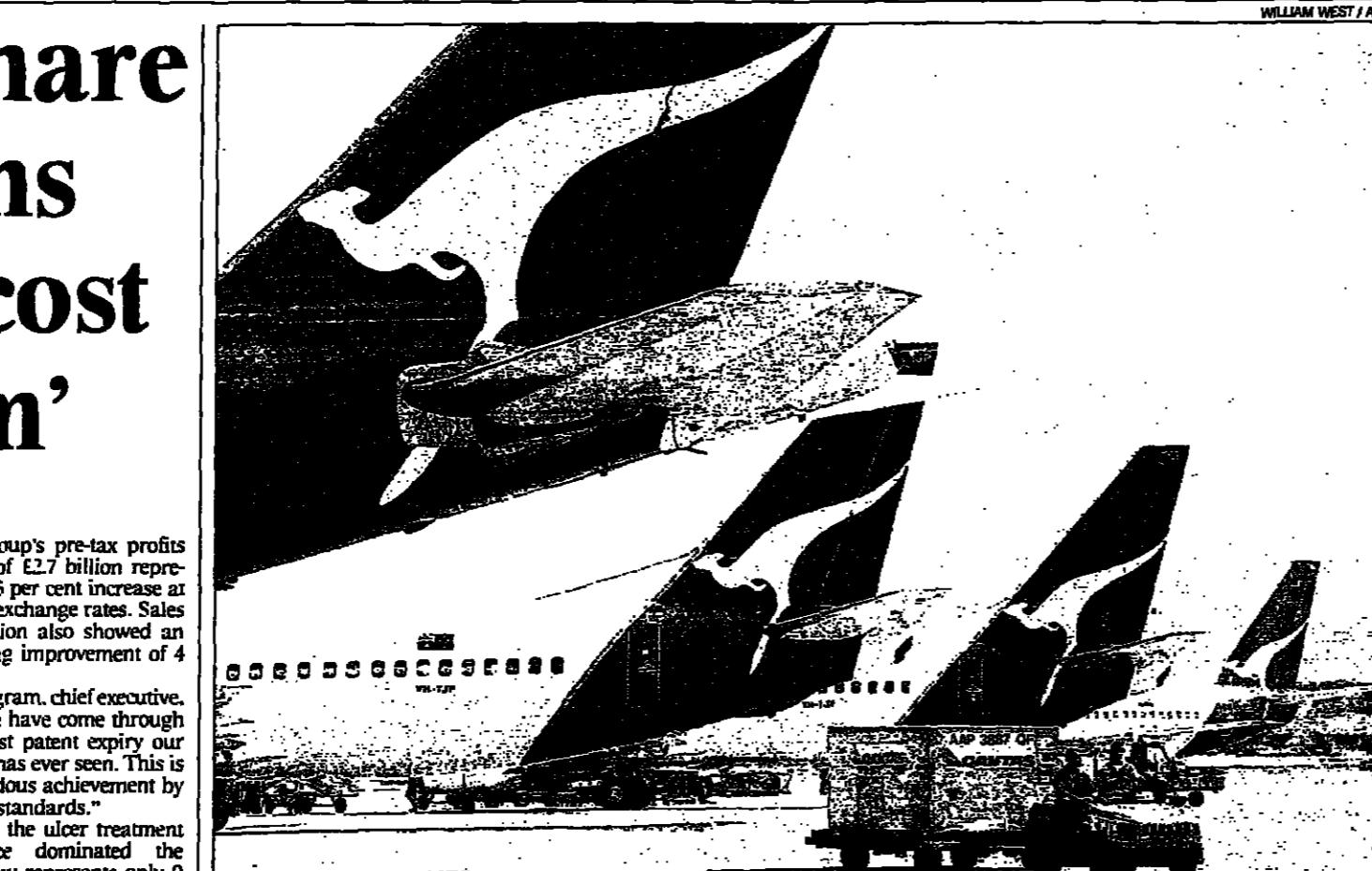
By PAUL DURMAN

SMITHKLINE BEECHAM is remaining tight-lipped about its plans for Paxil CR, a new form of its big-selling anti-depressant that is expected to take SkyePharma through to profitability.

SkyePharma helped develop Paxil CR and should earn a 3 per cent royalty on sales when the drug is launched in the US. Paxil, known as Seroxat in the UK, had American sales last year of £700 million, making it the UK's biggest-selling drug.

News yesterday that the US Food and Drug Administration has approved Paxil CR initially lifted SkyePharma's shares from 82½p to 92p. Salomon Smith Barney suggested SkyePharma will make an £8.4 million profit next year, and will earn £13 million a year from Paxil CR by 2002.

SkyePharma's shares later slipped back to 85p, as SB declined to clarify its launch plans for the anti-depressant. However, another possibility is that SB intends to use Paxil CR as part of its strategy to defend Paxil's patent protection, which expires in 2006. The patents on Paxil CR extend beyond this date.



Ready for take off: Qantas is confident that it will at least match last year's record profit of A\$304.8 million in this financial year

Qantas defies Asian turmoil

By PAUL ARMSTRONG

QANTAS AIRWAYS surprised investors yesterday when it reported a 34 per cent jump in interim net profit in the face of the Asian economic crisis.

The Australian airline, in which British Airways has a 25 per cent stake, said net earnings totalled A\$223 million

(£57 million) for the half year to December 31, reflecting its move to replace many Asian routes with flights to the US and the UK.

Analysts said that they would upgrade their full-year profit forecasts on the back of the result. The stock closed 21 cents higher at A\$3.92.

They had been concerned that Qantas would feel at least

some of the pain dealt to other airlines in the region by Asia's malaise.

Gary Pemberton, chairman, said: "In the face of difficult market conditions, we were able to absorb significant capital expenditure, maintain balance sheet gearing and increase profits."

He said Qantas was confident it would at least match

last year's record profit of A\$304.8 million this financial year.

Analysts did not rule out the prospect of Asia still damaging Qantas's earnings, but they are confident that the worst had passed. Qantas is a member of the oneworld alliance, whose other members include BA, American Airlines and Iberia.

RJB threatens to close mines

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

RJB MINING has threatened to close mines with the loss of more than 800 jobs if the company is hit by strikes, according to the union poised to launch the first walkout.

Richard Budge, RJB's chief executive, said he would close three mines in Yorkshire if industrial action stops production, said Neil Greatrex, general secretary of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Talks between RJB and the generator are continuing but some in the industry are pessimistic that the coal producer will get sufficient orders.

RJB said that Mr Budge's

comments had been distorted. "The conversation was about the likely outcome of a short fall of about three million tonnes and it was said that that equated to the output of two to three pits."

Pit closures would be highly controversial so soon after last year's change of government policy to make the energy market fairer for coal. They would be seen as a blunt instrument used by RJB to cut costs.

A final dividend of 21p increases the total by 3 per cent to 36p a share.

■ Shareholders in Zeneca yesterday gave overwhelming backing to its £45 billion merger with Astra of Sweden. More than 539 million shares were voted in favour of the deal, with fewer than six million voting against. In a month's time Astra's shareholders will vote on the merger, which is opposed by a group representing small Swedish shareholders.

Investor, the Swedish investment group that owns more than 10 per cent of Astra, has given strong backing to the deal, which also needs to be approved by US and European competition authorities.

Tempus, page 30

Narrow victory for Tay board

By ROBERT LEA

CONFUSION surrounded the attempted boardroom coup at Tay Homes last night after the official result of an extraordinary meeting of shareholders declared that the plans of dissident investors had been defeated by the narrowest margins.

Shortly after the declaration, which showed a victory for the incumbent directors by 50.8 per cent to 49.2 per cent,

the rebel shareholders' camp questioned the figures released to the Stock Exchange.

Richard Tice, who forced the meeting in an attempt to sack Tay's executive directors and replace them with a management team led by himself, said that by his calculations his camp should have received 400,000 more votes. Mr Tice's motion was defeated by 12 million votes to 11.6 million.

If the result stands as com-

municated to the Stock Exchange — and a spokesman for Tay last night said there was "absolutely no question" that the numbers, which were verified by PricewaterhouseCoopers, are correct — then it is believed Mr Tice will launch a takeover bid.

Tice, the joint chief executive of rival housebuilder Sunley, which has an 11 per cent stake in Tay, had received backing from Phillips & Drew, the com-

pany's largest single investor. The fund manager holds 17 per cent of Tay.

Mr Tice said: "We are monitoring the situation very closely." Privately he was encouraged by the fact that when the votes of the board are stripped out, his motion received the support of 70 per cent of Tay investors.

Of the official result, John Swanson, Tay's chief executive, said: "A win's a win."

BAe denies reports of freeze on Saudi arms deal

By ADAM JONES

BRITISH AEROSPACE vehemently denied reports yesterday that the ongoing Al Yamamah arms deal with Saudi Arabia has been frozen.

The reports had caused BAe shares to slump from the opening price of 430p to 385p, forcing BAe, which is the prime contractor on the project, to issue a statement.

It said: "The company confirms that no such moves to freeze the programme have taken place and that the Al Yamamah programme continues as planned."

The Ministry of Defence

also denied the reports of a freeze. The reassurances helped BAe shares to rally, closing at 412p.

Last autumn, BAe shares were hit by anxieties about an outstanding cash payment from Saudi Arabia. Under the Al Yamamah deal, BAe is mainly paid in oil, with balancing cash payments if necessary to compensate for fluctuations in the oil price, which has been struggling at historic lows in recent months. It is understood that several hundred million pounds were duly paid to BAe in December.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Nomura share sales trigger investigation

SECURITIES industry inspectors are mounting an investigation at Nomura, Japan's biggest securities house. The inspection by the country's Securities and Exchange Surveillance Commission comes after a big sell-off of shares in Tokyo after fears of the extent of the losses in its US businesses. Nomura is also reportedly the subject of a second inspection by Japan's Financial Supervisory Agency. Although this is routine, the agency is said to be evaluating Nomura's assets after the overseas losses.

The financial health of Nomura, which made losses in the first half of the current financial year of more than £1 billion, has been the subject of speculation after its losses in the US stemming from its real-estate finance and mortgage-backed bonds business. Its overseas units were also hit hard on Russian bond losses. Capital Company of America, a wholly owned subsidiary in the US, said in October that it expected to post an after-tax loss of \$275 million (£170 million) in the half year to September 30. Nomura, which is best known in the UK for its deal-doing principal finance team headed by Guy Hands, declined to comment on the investigations.

Cookson sells division

COOKSON, the materials conglomerate, has sold its fibres business to a venture capital group for £93 million. The disposal forms part of Cookson's drive to reduce the number of businesses it operates in order to focus on electronics, ceramics and engineering. Cookson Fibers makes solution-dyed fibres for the automotive and upholstery industries and fine denier fibres for textiles and clothing. Last year Cookson Fibers made profits of £10.3 million and had net assets at the year end of £89 million. Cookson will take a £3 million write-off.

Waddington warning

WADDINGTON became the latest packaging group to warn investors on profits, sending its shares down 12½p to 186½p. It said profits would be 10 per cent below City expectations and gave warning that tough trading conditions would continue "well into the next financial year". It estimates that profits for the year to April 31 will be about £31 million compared with market forecasts of £35 million. Last year the company reported profits of £39.6 million. Earlier this week Low & Bonar, a rival packaging company, issued a similar warning.

Debonair in black

DEBONAIR, the Easdaq-quoted airline based in Luton, hailed a turning point for the company yesterday as it reported third-quarter profits. With load factors up to 62 per cent from 48 per cent the previous year, the cut-price operator made operating profits in the three months to December 31 of £500,000 compared with quarterly losses of £1.2 million in 1997. Turnover was up by £1 million to £8.6 million in the quarter. Losses for the year so far are running 17 per cent lower at £4.3 million.

Ibstock quits Portugal

IBSTOCK, the building products group that is in the process of being taken over by CRH, the Irish company, in a £326 million deal, is liquidating its interests in Portugal. The company said that after previous non-core disposals in the country it was now also disposing of its holding in Caima Ceramica e Servicos, giving Ibstock £21.6 million in cash after costs. Philip Mengel, the chief executive, said that the company was now concentrated on the British and American markets.

CPL scents profit fall

SHARES of CPL Aromas fell 19p to 64p yesterday after the producer and distributor of flavours, fragrances and aroma ingredients gave warning that profits would fall significantly below current market expectations in the year to March 31. The company blamed depressed retail demand in the UK and the adverse impact of unfavourable exchange rates on CPL's export business. Trading in Eastern Europe and the Far East was also weak. In the past financial year the company earned pre-tax profits of £1.9 million on sales of £35 million.

Honda in US boost

HONDA, Japan's third-largest carmaker, said net income rose nearly 16 per cent to a record £75.6 billion (£390 million) in the third quarter as strong US sales and a weak yen more than offset falling domestic and Asian sales. Third-quarter sales in North America, which generates most of Honda's profits, rose 7.7 per cent. But Honda gave warning that the yen's sudden sharp appreciation against the dollar late last year was likely to weigh on revenues for the full year to March 31, reducing sales by more than £100 billion.

Wolseley in five deals

WOLSELEY, the building products company, has acquired five distribution businesses in America, Britain and the Republic of Ireland for £38 million. These businesses are expected to contribute £92 million to turnover in a full year. In the current financial year Wolseley has acquired businesses valued at a total of £216 million and which will contribute sales of £439 million annually. The largest acquisition announced yesterday was Heamelements, a plumbing products distributor based in Athlone in the Irish Republic, with sales of £28.4 million.

Carrefour advances

CARREFOUR, the French supermarket group, said it was on target to lift operating profits by 20 per cent this year even if currency devaluations in Brazil and Argentina continued to have an adverse impact on its Latin American operations. Yesterday Carrefour reported a 7.9 per cent rise in 1998 net profits to £616 million (£420 million) before exceptional charges. Sales rose 6.2 per cent to £27.4 billion. Carrefour booked an exceptional profit of £31 million from the sale of the company's Depot US, Depot France and Carrefour outlets.

	Bank	Bus	Bus
Australia \$	2.67	2.49	
Austria Sch	22.00	19.35	
Belgium Fr	61.96	55.00	
Canada \$	2.587	2.389	
Denmark Kr	0.850	0.729	
Egypt	11.40	10.00	
Finland Mk	5.78	5.17	
France Fr	15.01	14.23	
Germany Dm	3.007	2.765	
Greece Dr	1.65	1.55	
Hong Kong \$	12.49	12.29	
Iceland	1.28	1.08	
India Ru	18.000	13.000	
Ireland P	1.100	1.000	
Israel Sh	7.00	6.34	
Italy Lira	2981	2754	
Japan Yen	22.07	19.14	
Malta	0.667	0.608	
Netherlands Gld	3.386	3.101	
New Zealand \$	3.17	2.95	
Norway Kr	13.20	12.36	
Portugal Esc	304.11	282.08	
Spain Pt	10.74	9.78	
Sweden Kr	13.77	12.67	
Switzerland Fr</			

Scandal begets scandal. It seems that when Gordon Brown stands up next month and dispenses a little largesse, he will be handing out the guilt money squeezed out of those who mis-sold personal pensions. Not only is the Chancellor guilty of giving us a somewhat enhanced view of the strength of the economy, as he broadcasts a surplus that has been secretly swollen with one-off compensation payments of which, apparently, the Treasury has not kept count. He is also missing an opportunity to begin to tackle the terrifying problem of how public sector pensions will eventually be paid.

The unfunded nature of most of the public sector schemes has long been a source of fear to those who dare to think long term about such matters. With retired nurses and teachers likely to be drawing their pensions for many years than did Mr Chipping, the burden on the public finances could be unbearable. This is the sort of issue no Government wants to tackle better to keep on running up the bills for the next administration to pay.

But if Mr Brown had been really brave, he could have taken the money that is now being handed over by the private sector pensions industry and used it as seed corn on which to start growing a more sensible solution to the problem of public sector pensions. In the United States, Bill

Clinton is husbanding some of the surplus he has found in the social security budget and segregating it as the start for a new fund. It would be one example of White House behaviour which might have transferred well to Downing Street. Yet this is wishful thinking. The Government's radical ideas on pensions appear to have vanished to the back benches with Frank Field and now the whole debate seems to have been mired in the turf wars between the Treasury and the Department of Social Security.

While the tussle goes on, the private sector seems content to sit weekly back and await instructions. The companies have been so battered by the opprobrium heaped upon them for mis-selling that they do not have the nerve to step forward now and offer constructive advice. They are appalled at the way the compensation they are paying to reinstated public sector pensioners is being used to swell the public purse and privately mutter about the iniquity of a windfall tax by any other name. Yet they would not dream of voicing their concerns publicly for fear of the terrible repercussions that might re-

sult. A handbagging by Helen Liddell left its mark, as did the plentiful threats that those finance houses that misbehaved might find themselves blacklisted from selling new products dreamed up by the Government.

So there is silence on the subject. But when Mr Brown generously hands some extra cash to the health service, spare a thought for how we are going to fund all those nurses' pensions.

Who mocks the meat it feeds on?

Guy Hands is away from his office at the moment. He can still afford a decent holiday, despite the refusal of the institutions to pay what he deemed a reasonable price for William Hill. Even now, Norman stands to have turned a profit of about £90 million on the deal in just 15 months. The Hands pay

packet may not reach its record £40 million again but it will still make most City salaries look like small change. Could it be that the merest hint of jealousy influenced a few fund managers in their determination to batter down the William Hill price?

The green-eyed monster would be a less worrying explanation than the one emanating from the Hill camp yesterday. That put the blame firmly on the institutions' lack of enthusiasm for anything other than the largest companies, preferably in telecoms, pharmaceuticals or financial services. Some of these stocks have already been driven to levels unsatisfactory on logical grounds but the wondrous thing about the investors' commitment to the big cap stocks is that it becomes self-justifying. They keep buying the stocks and the prices keep rising.

At some stage the market must break out of this pattern, but in

the meantime smaller companies are not merely consigned to the second league but a different game completely.

With a market capitalisation of just under £500 million, William Hill was apparently dismissed as the sort of tiddler that major investors would only consider buying at bargain prices. They will happily pay 70 times earnings for Vodafone but a chain of betting shops has been beaten down to a p/e of just 9.4. It may not be the most glamorous business, and its growth potential may be limited but invertebrate punters assure Hill of a steady stream of profits.

The extraordinary polarisation of the market now being created by unimaginative investors is fuelling the desire of many companies to go private. Hundreds of businesses are currently examining the prospects for bailing out of the stock market and all the expensive hassle that a quotation

brings with it. Venture capitalists will help them. The clever ones will then put together several companies in the same sector and create a business of sufficient scale to appeal to institutional investors. Then they will float it — and turn the sort of profits that make the herd of fund managers truly jealous.

UK's finest need to insure a future

Britain's once mighty world-leading insurance industry is looking ever more puny, viewed from outside. Global insurers are being created and our finest left behind.

Aegon of The Netherlands, hardly a household name even though it owns Scottish Equitable, has just agreed to gobble up Transamerica, which shares its founder with Bank of America and surely seemed proof even against another earthquake to most residents of San Francisco.

The deal turns Aegon into the world's third-biggest quoted insurer, after America's AIG and Germany's Allianz. It also becomes second only to American Prudential in the US life market.

Not that this is an equal deal. Transamerica is valued at £6 billion, mostly in Aegon shares, the size of a middling UK group. Aegon was already valued at £34 billion. Among insurers with a UK element, only Swiss-based Zurich operates in this league.

Our own mighty Pru, the equivalent quoted life assurance leader, comes in at just half Aegon's value pre-Transamerica. Legal & General and CGU rate £12 billion. Any of them would make a fine meal for Aegon or its rivals in a couple of years time.

To make life trickier, continental insurers are protected against takeover. Aegon, in the usual Dutch way, has a linked foundation, which will restore its holding to a controlling 40 per cent. It makes British rivals look puny.

Kiss and make up

WITH Valentine's Day now just a misty memory the would-be investment trust lovers — 3i and Electra — have fallen out. Like two spoilt teenagers brimful of the terrors of first-time infatuation, neither is prepared to talk to the other unless the other makes the first move. Look carefully in the corner of the sixth form common room and you will see each in wounded, self-righteous debate with friends. Yet they studiously avoid direct contact. For shareholders' sakes, the adolescent intriguing should stop.

Aegon joins superleague with \$9.7bn US purchase

BY MARIANNE CURPHAY

AEGON took a leap into the superleague of world insurers yesterday by announcing that it was paying \$9.7 billion (£5.95 billion) for Transamerica, the financial services company based in San Francisco (see Commentary, this page).

The move will propel Aegon to the number three slot in life insurance in the world by market value and make it the third largest US life insurer by assets and premiums written.

After the acquisition, which is expected to be completed by the summer, Aegon will generate two thirds of its profit in the US, up from 51 per cent. In terms of market capitalisation the combined company will be dwarfed only by AIG of the US and Allianz of Germany.

Aegon, based in The Hague and owner of Scottish Equitable in the UK, derives about 86 per cent of its business from life insurance and already has sub-

stantial business interests in the UK, Hungary and Spain. Although the deal marks the Dutch insurer's largest purchase to date, Aegon said it was still looking for acquisitions.

Kees Storm, chairman of Aegon, said only the high prices of European insurance companies were preventing the company from further expansion.

Aegon's offer is 70 per cent shares and 30 per cent cash and represents a 34.5 per cent premium to Transamerica's closing price yesterday. The latter has \$38.5 billion in assets.

Aegon will assume \$1.1 billion in Transamerica's debt. The Dutch insurer said the deal would lift its earnings per share growth in 1999, helping to achieve growth of about 12 to 15 per cent.

The purchase follows Aegon's purchase of Providian, the US group valued at \$3.5 billion, just over two years ago.

Avesta woe hits British Steel price

BY CARL MORTISHED

BRITISH STEEL yesterday suffered a blow as Avesta Sheffield, its Stockholm-listed subsidiary disclosed further evidence of weakness in the stainless steel market.

Shares in British Steel fell 3 per cent, to 1194p, as Avesta recorded a third-quarter loss of Swkr521 million (£40 million), giving a nine-month loss of Swkr1 billion, and spoke of price pressures caused by surplus capacity in Europe after a fall in exports to Asia.

Avesta said that stainless steel prices continued to fall for most of the third quarter, with cold-rolled coil down 13 per cent compared with 1997's third-quarter prices. Avesta has also been hit by US anti-dumping duties, adding a 13.5 per cent tariff to imports from the UK from December.

However, Avesta said base prices stabilised at the turn of the year, with US price rises expected to take effect in March and Asian prices strengthening after gains in Japanese and Korean currencies.

Pace order in US lifts share price

BY SAEED SHAH

THE first US order for Pace Micro Technology's digital set-top boxes, announced yesterday, boosted the shares.

The price jumped 214p to 1404p, to a two-year high, as a result of the deal with BellSouth in Atlanta. Pace will supply the telecoms company with 100,000 multipoint microwave distribution (MMDS) boxes, for an undisclosed sum.

Pace had a troubled launch on to the market in 1996 as digital television failed to take off as quickly as expected. The shares' launch price was 172p, but they sunk as low as 25p.

Pace last month reported

dramatically improved results, as digital TV started to become established in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

Pre-tax profit was £3.3 million

for the six months to November 28, compared with a loss of £12.3 million in the previous year.

MMDS works like satellite TV,

but is broadcast from ground-based transmitter masts.

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Visser saves Brown & Jackson £1m

THE decision by Johan Visser, chief executive of Brown & Jackson, to put a stop to the discount retailer's plans to shut a fifth of its Poundstretcher stores saved £1.1 million, the company's interim results yesterday revealed (Fraser Nelson writes).

Mr Visser, who was parachuted in when Pepkor of South Africa took control of the company two years ago, yesterday explained: "When I arrived, 63 Poundstretcher stores were earmarked for closure. Some of the disposals

had already gone through, but I was able to save 34."

The mixture of saving on the closure costs plus the return to the sales growth across the 239-strong Poundstretcher chain, saw the company writing back £1.1 million from a previous provision.

In the six months to December 31 pre-tax profits at the group which includes 151 Your More Stores and 91 What Everyone Wants outlets came in at £22 million (£13.2 million). Brown & Jackson shares added 75p to a five-year high of 1049p.

Brown cashes in on pensions



COMMENTARY by our City Editor

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be as simple as it sounds. We can help you get you what you want. Quickly and easily. Talk to us about Ericsson's next generation's networks and you'll see what we mean.

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ERICSSON

STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Contract fears send BAe into nosedive

CLAIMS that the most lucrative contract for British Aerospace had been scuppered sent the shares into a nosedive, touching 385p before ending 18p down at 412p, making it the worst performing stock among the top 100.

Diplomatic sources were credited with a report that the lucrative Al Yamamah oil-for-arms contract with Saudi Arabia had been shelved because of the country's economic problems.

The story was met by firm denials from both the Ministry of Defence and BAe. But by then the damage had already been done to British Aerospace with GEC also down 11p to 515p.

Al Yamamah is reckoned to be worth £2 billion a year in revenue. But the collapse in the crude price means Saudi Arabia will be forced to top up the oil payments with hard cash. It was estimated at the time of BAe's interim results that a £500 million shortfall had already occurred.

Last night dealers had begun pointing the finger of suspicion for the story at market bears anxious to call the BAe share price lower ahead of next week's final results.

Share prices generally endured another heller-skeller performance with an early mark-up generated by another healthy set of trading results from blue chip companies.

At one stage, the FTSE 100 index had replaced a rise of 44.9 with a deficit of 71.3. But an opening rally on Wall Street enabled the index to reduce the fall to just 3.5 at 6,074.9 by the close.

Total turnover reached 998 million shares. The London Stock Exchange enjoyed its best trading month to date in January, with £366 billion of stock changing hands. Turnover in eurozone stocks, transacted in euros, accounted for 42 per cent of the total value of business undertaken by the LSE.

The City gave the thumbs-up to final results from Glaxo Wellcome, up 21p to £20.14, despite the drugs group reporting a downturn in profits. It follows the expiry of patents for its two bestselling drugs, Zovirax and Zantac. But the company, whose chairman is Sir Richard Sykes and chief executive Robert Ingram, was upbeat about the future and said there was scope for further growth in some areas.

The speculative buying that



Sir Richard Sykes, flanked by Robert Ingram, left, and John Coombe, finance director, saw Glaxo Wellcome rise has been behind the recent surge in demand for Legal & General shows signs of running out of steam with the price unmoved at 863p. HSBC Securities, the broker, cut its rating from "buy" to "add". Dealers say the life insurance sector has been galvanised by talk of a merger between Barclays Bank, 18p better at 16.86, and the Prudential.

Kingfisher sported a rise of

25p at 734p on the back of some useful trading news from Carrefour, the French retailer, and a "buy" recommendation from Warburg Dillon Read, the broker.

Sir Alastair Grant, chairman of Scottish & Newcastle, bought 20,000 shares at 685p, taking his holding to 50,000 shares. The S&N share price has dropped from a peak of 945p last year to close last night 7p up at 683p.

Smithkline Beecham responded positively to this week's bullish comments from Nomura, the Japanese securities house, with a rise of 50p to 525p. Nomura puts a price of £271 a share on Shield if it can find a merger partner.

Hawfinf firmed up to 244p as Richard Morgan, a non-executive director, bought 100,000 shares at 234p. Share buying by one director was also recorded in AIM-listed Future Integrated Telephony, 1p firmer at 354p. David Ellison, a non-executive director, has bought 75,000 shares at 35p, stretching his holding to 85,000, or less than 1 per cent of the company.

McKendall dipped 4p to 348p after Merrill Lynch, the broker, reduced its recommendation for the shares from "accumulate" to "neutral".

A downbeat trading statement left Allen nursing a fall of 34p to 292p.

The cry of "fore!" reverberated around the Square Mile as shares of Golf Club Holdings stood out with a jump of 5p, or almost 25 per cent, to 254p. The company says it knows of no reason for the rise.

St Modwena advanced 4p to 734p helped by a "buy" recommendation from Warburg Dillon Read, the broker.

□ GILT-EDGED: Opening losses among US treasury bonds left London closing below its best levels of the day after an early mark-up.

Short and longer-dated issues

fared well but medium issues came under selling pressure.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt ended 7p down at £16.98 as a total of 29,000 contracts were completed. Among conventional issues Treasury 8 per cent 2022 rose 33p to £148.85 while in shorts Treasury 7 per cent 2002 finished 5p firmer at £106.99.

□ NEW YORK: Shares were generally higher in morning trade. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was up 47.98 at 9,243.45.

doubts. They say there is little evidence of the price war escalating. "The situation has not materially altered," said one broker.

Paul Smiddy, food retail analyst at Credit Lyonnais, the broker, is also sceptical about the latest survey and places more importance in the findings of the Office of Fair Trading inquiry into the industry due out within the next month.

"The sector looks bombarded out and reasonable value at these levels," he says.

But brokers have their

FEARS are increasing that the supermarket price wars are hotting up again. The latest ACB survey shows some of the bigger players losing market share such as Safeway, unchanged at 281p, Tesco, 31p higher at 174p, J Sainsbury, 14p off at 377p, and Somerfield 1p easier at 369p.

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Pernicious dumping

From Dr Denis MacShane, MP for Rotherham (Labour)

Sir, Cari Mortished's pertinent analysis of the world's steel industry (February 17) should not be allowed to obscure one crucial fact.

Dumping is just as pernicious and unfair a trade practice as protectionism.

Despite the crisis in Asia, there has been very little effort to reduce steel output in the region. According to the latest figures China and Taiwan have increased production of steel.

The UK, despite the long economic boom, saw crude steel production drop by 6.6 per cent in 1997 in contrast to Korea where output went down by 5.9 per cent and in India which saw a drop of just 2.9 per cent over the same period.

In other words, despite a decline in the Asian regional economy since 1997, Asian steel producers have not adjusted and have switched to soft European markets.

There is evidence in certain sectors, notably stainless steel wire, that dumping – selling at below production costs – is taking place. Dumping sends out all the wrong economic signals and distorts trade. If

clear, prima facie evidence of dumping exists in steel then such market distortions need to be put right by countervailing duties. The opposite of protectionism cannot be dumping. Both need to be combat to promote free and fair trade.

Yours faithfully,

DENIS MACSHANE, Chair, Steel Group of MPs, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

Would you be willing to buy shares in the National Health Service?

Every Secretary of State and every Government for 50 years has been faced with the question: "What should be done with the NHS?" The first difficulty in addressing the question is finding the starting point: the condition of the service today.

Of the following two scenarios, which one rings most true?

■ Scenario 1: Growing crisis. The NHS is in crisis again. A depressing daily news diet of bed shortages, patients on trolleys, unsafe levels of intensive care beds, shortage of nurses, overworked junior doctors, relations being asked to undertake basic nursing duties, crises of morale, criminal assaults on staff, almost 2 per cent of the population on a waiting list, GPs squabbling with the Secretary of State, accusations of hidden rationing and so on. A service near to breakdown.

■ Scenario 2: Success story. Despite the occasional short-term operational difficulties that are inevitable in an organisation of such a size, the success of the NHS continues. The best elements of recent structural reforms have been consolidated and the worst elements jettisoned and replaced. More patients are being treated than ever before. The service is to receive a further significant increase in funding. Sensible levels of management are now in place in a service that has historically been under-managed. Technology and drug therapies are advancing rapidly. Many are now treated on a day-case basis. Waiting lists, inevitable because of finite resources, are now back under control. The NHS is the envy of the world.

Both of these views are largely true. Indeed, taken together, they probably reflect how the public sees the NHS – a modern day marvel, but rather threadbare around the edges.

The NHS is full of such paradoxes. This would not much matter, except that understanding and agreeing about the current state of the service is an essential starting point



Close examination of strategic, operational and managerial issues may identify ways of improving the service, but the solutions may be uncomfortable

in considering how to shape its future.

For example, a subscriber to what we might call the "sunny side up" view, may reasonably conclude that "it ain't bust, so don't fix it". A bit of tinkering may be called for here and there, of course, but basically the NHS is in pretty good shape.

The more pessimistic among us, however, might be of the opinion that radical action is required to prevent the NHS from breaking down altogether.

So, in terms of thinking through what might be done to improve the NHS, we have a pretty fundamental difficulty – it is not obvious where we are now. Superimposed onto this difficulty are three fresh pressures on healthcare resources, which are powerful and gaining momentum. They are:

■ The ageing population. People are living longer and as they age they are consuming

more and more health-care resources.

■ Continual advances in technology and drugs mean that more can be done for more people, but (usually) at a greater cost. A good example of this is Viagra.

■ There are increased public expectations about what can be expected from healthcare systems and the quality of life to which people are entitled.

There are very many experts better qualified than I to offer views about how the NHS can meet these challenges. There are advocates for the better use of technology, the creation of better partnerships, improved collabora-

tion between various parts of the system, more effective use of human resources and so on. Others argue that these challenges cannot be met solely by tactical improvements and require a significant in-

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR THE NHS

tion of resources. To the outsider (and probably to most insiders), the strength of these arguments is virtually impossible to assess. The NHS is just so big, complex and diverse. Not only is it dif-

ficult to agree where we are now, but judging the effectiveness of proposed solutions is a forbidding task.

One way of breaking free of such impenetrable issues is to consider a different question. Ignore "What should be done about the NHS" and start, instead, with "Would you buy shares in it?"

Assuming we are rational investors, what questions would we ask before investing in the enterprise? Let us agree that, because we are looking at public provision and because we do not have the space here, we will leave to one side the obvious starting point of whether the business is making money. Instead, we will move straight to some of the strategic, opera-

tional and managerial issues that we might generally consider.

Is this an organisation that:

Has a clear mission and purpose, understood and accepted by everyone in it?

Has clear objectives?

Has leadership?

Has robust demand for its products and services?

Lacks competitors?

Has a well-defined product or service range that is of standard quality and tested effectiveness?

Has a manageable number of stakeholders?

Has long-term planning horizons?

Is investing in the future?

Provides a consistent level of service across all its service points?

Is your personal supplier of choice?

Has a sensible management and organisation structure that avoids the development of independent power bases, anti-corporate attitudes and professional field?

Is well managed and has a reasonable level of managerial freedom?

Lives within its means and has control over its costs?

Has good information systems?

Has a well-trained and motivated workforce?

Uses its resources efficiently and effectively?

Treats its patients like valued customers?

Is reasonably free from political interference?

Attracts only a reasonable amount of media attention?

Ask yourself these questions. What do you think, would you buy shares? Although we will all produce a different array of answers to these questions, perhaps depending on our personal experience of the NHS, I suspect that for most of us the negatives will outweigh the affirmatives by a considerable margin. We might safely draw two general business conclusions from this analysis.

Although it has undeniable strengths, the NHS has some important strategic weaknesses. In particular, it lacks a clear purpose. It has a fantastic capacity to do things and undergoes agonies in seeking to ensure that it does things right. But is it doing the right things? It is unclear whether the current role of the NHS is to meet all of everyone's healthcare needs, or a more limited subset. What should its role be in the future? Successive Secretaries of State have sent out conflicting signals about this. Would the NHS benefit from an adult, sensible debate about what it will and will not (or can and cannot) do in the future so that there is complete clarity about its purpose and boundaries?

Secondly, the NHS has a number of operational and managerial weaknesses. Perhaps the most important is the lack of managerial freedom. For example, NHS trusts were originally heralded as "self-governing". In practice, they are anything but. They have very limited powers (for example, concerning the raising of capital) and are subject to a whole range of controls by a whole range of bodies.

Some of this control is, of course, essential. But imagine if, instead of the current arrangements, trusts were given a ten-year service contract (with appropriate break points for underperformance) that set out what they must deliver and to what standards, and what they will be paid for it. Suppose trusts were then left to get on and manage their own affairs, held accountable only to the terms of the contract. Would any of the "no" answers change to "yes" over the decade?

Casting an investor's eye over the NHS may identify some ways of improving the service. But although the questions are simple, the answers may be radical or even uncomfortable.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID WILLIAMS is a director of Ernst & Young's Risk Consulting group.

Orange loses its appeal

From Mrs Margaret Crick

Sir, In your Corporate Profile of Orange (February 8) you report that the company aims to have 10,000 mobile phone masts by 2001. This is alarming news for those who love the countryside.

Despite strong objections from our parish council, Orange has erected a 30-metre mast on a hill close to our village, which is in a beautiful and unspoilt rural part of Oxfordshire. The mast can be seen from a wide area, and intrudes into many lovely views across the valley.

Orange's Millennium Landmark Initiative might be trying to make masts less ugly, but if they can't be disguised in areas of high landscape value, should they be there at all?

Yours faithfully,
MARGARET CRICK,
2 Blue Row, Swithland,
Oxfordshire, OX7 4BA.

Unwanted designs on Gucci

Fraser Nelson reports on the latest battle being waged for the Italian fashion house

For all the elegance of its silk dresses and leather handbags, Gucci's boardroom in Milan has been the venue of some of the most brutal scenes in the history of the fashion industry.

Domenico De Sole, its chief executive, has seen them all. He joined in 1984 to adjudicate between the warring Gucci family, and when they all lost out to Investcorp, the investment bank, he was made head of the company.

"I say jokingly that we had World War I and World War II at Gucci," he says. "I am a veteran of both. World War I was inter-family feuding, and World War II was Maurizio Gucci and Investcorp."

Now, he is preparing for World War III. This time, the enemy is Bernard Arnault, chair-

man of LVMH, the scourge of Diageo, and once again the independence of the Italian fashion house is at stake.

For the past five weeks, M Arnault's company – which owns a stable of famous labels including Kenzo, Givenchy and Christian Dior – has been snapping up shares of Gucci, building a stake from 5.3 per cent to 34.5 per cent. Although this is billed as a "strategic investment", Signor De Sole believes his French counterpart is planning a coup of sorts.

Now, he has decided to go hostile. Yesterday he announced that Gucci was creat-

ing 20 million new shares, to be owned by an employee trust, which would counter any power LVMH had on Gucci's board.

He says the move was made with regret, but in self-defence. "When he first started buying the shares, I was open-minded. Then when he started buying more and more shares, I became somewhat suspicious, and now we see what his plans are."

M Arnault's demands are simple. He wants an LVMH-approved director to sit on Gucci board meetings, and has used his 34.5 per cent shareholding to force Signor De Sole to call a shareholder meeting to make this possible. It may seem a reasonable request, but Signor De Sole suspects M Arnault wants to use the director as a Trojan horse – allowing LVMH to take control of Gucci without any takeover premium.

M Arnault believes this is a hysterical reaction. He has made long and gushing speeches about his admiration for Signor De Sole and Tom Ford, his senior designer. Without them, he says, he would not be interested in Gucci – and his investment is a mark of respect, not malice.

Both men say the fracas could have all worked out differently. M Arnault says he was willing to agree to all Gucci's demands, but only if he saw the directors' contracts. He suspects they contain "poison pill" clauses that could allow Mr Ford and Signor De Sole to abandon Gucci once LVMH has control.

Signor De Sole says his contract is none of LVMH's business – and says M Arnault must now either bid for the company or leave them in peace.

Last night, LVMH said it would take the whole issue to court to finally decide what Gucci is required to do under Dutch law, as the company is listed on the Amsterdam stock exchange. With the main show-down not due until April, Signor De Sole's World War III is only just beginning.

Turner prize

AN INVITATION arrives to hear Adair Turner, Director-General of the CBI, giving his views on "Reflecting on 1998: Lessons from the Global Financial Turmoil". Sounds like fun, except for one thing. I have a pretty good idea where I shall be on March 9, and I suspect Turner, too, will be equally office-bound. It's Budget day.

The CBI confirms that the date has, indeed, been put back. Budget day has been set for weeks. Both of us are baffled why the invitations should only just have gone out for an event that has already been

cancelled, and I get no response from the issuer. So much for the business acumen, then, of the Centre for International Business Studies at South Bank University.

One hopes they rearrange the fixture before Turner leaves the CBI at the end of the year to write a book about the "Third Way". His early retirement has gone largely unnoticed, and it breaks what, at times, been an uneasy relationship with the current President, Sir Clive Thompson.

This means both the CBI and the Institute of Directors are on the lookout for new chief executives this year. Plus approaching a dozen large public companies. Perhaps they should apply to South Bank's Centre for International Business Studies.

ANOTHER invitation for the IoD's annual convention. "Power, People & Performance in the 21st Century" is the theme, late April the date. And never mind the next century, by April at least two of the speakers may not be in power or in any position to perform. Michael Grade's First Leisure is in bid/merger/disposal talks after a long period of stock market underperformance.

THE TIMES
CITY DIARY

ance. And Sir Paul Condon, of the Met Police, has troubles of his own. I believe.

Damned lies
THANKS to those readers who have attempted to explain the graph I reproduced yesterday from Electra Investment Trust, which showed assets underperforming the stock market even as chairman Michael Stoddart told shareholders the opposite.

The general view is that you can prove anything from statistics, especially if you choose the right starting point for comparisons. For a more technical view I am indebted to Professor Andrew Dowswell of the Business Information Management unit at Glasgow Caledonian University.

THE forthcoming telephone number changes – again? What, again? – are tricky enough. They certainly seem to have defeated BT, which has put a briefing note in with recent phone bills explaining what the current codes are and how they will change by spring next year.

Alas, the new numbers are quite wrong, and the note has had to be reprinted. A reader spotted this and rang BT for an explanation. It was a "computer error", he was told. Actually, no; it was a mistake.

Net profit

THE official Manchester United Hotel that opened this week has some unexpected backing. Most of the £5 million needed was put up by private investors, one of them Howard Wilkinson, one-time manager of the England football team.

The link is through his wife, Sam, and Caroline Roberts, wife of the man behind the hotel, entrepreneur Peter Roberts. The two met when Sam, an interior designer, did some work for Caroline. Wilkinson tells me "If she is involved somehow, nothing can prevent it from being a success."

MARTIN WALLER
city.diary@the-times.co.uk

Wilkinson: backed the Manchester United Hotel

EARTH'S TWIN FOUND.

Who knows what tomorrow will bring? Read about the history of the next fifty years as predicted by today's visionaries, in Chronicle of the Future. read part 2 in this week's Sunday Times. www.chronicle-of-the-future.co.uk

THE SUNDAY TIMES



"Hey, fantastic. We've got a waterfall from the Halifax"

We are ready to serve the ambitions of Europe's businesses.

And you,
what do you expect
from the company which
supplies the electricity? That
it offers you global and competitive
energetic solutions... That besides energy,
it supplies you with services to suit your needs
and advice on how to reduce your bill and to use
your installations better... That it is willing
to accompany your development by following you on
all of your sites in Europe and beyond... That its position
as European leader in its sector and its international
development are your guarantees of its economic
strength. This is exactly what EDF guarantees
its customers. Each year EDF produces 470 billion
kWh. It is trusted by 45 million customers
worldwide. With its 117,000 employees,
including a thousand researchers and
20,000 engineers, it is recognized
for its skill in the electricity
engineering, production, trans-
mission and supply trades.
It is developing a multi-
energy offer. Its turnover
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Overdosing
on burgers
and Elvins

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POP

Lifting the
lid on the
soul of Blur

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Fifty years at the cutting edge

THEATRE: Nottingham's Playhouse is celebrating half a century of trailblazing. Daniel Rosenthal reports

Nottingham's theatregoers should raise a glass to the memory of Alderman Roland Green. At a meeting of the city's Labour-led council in February 1961, the members voted on whether to commit about £300,000 to the construction of a new home for the Playhouse theatre: 33 were in favour and 33 against. As Lord Mayor, Green had the casting vote — and chose culture ahead of budgetary restraint.

Had he sided with the opposition, the Playhouse would surely not have reached its fifth anniversary season, which resumes next week with a new production of Beckett's *Endgame*. Nor would Nottingham have become such an important destination in the careers of John Neville, Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, Richard Eyre and dozens of others.

The original Playhouse had opened with Shaw's *Man and Superman* on November 8, 1948, in a converted cinema. In the name of quality, André Van Gysghem, the Playhouse's first director, took the revolutionary step of mounting a new production every fortnight, rather than every week as in most rep.

The actor-director John Harrison took charge in 1951, handing over to Val May six years later. Frank Dunlop was the director when the new Playhouse was completed in Wellington Circus in 1963. Designed by Peter Moro, it boasted a striking, glass-fronted foyer, a circular, 750-seat auditorium and a stage four times deeper than the Playhouse's first. The opening of the new building and the appointment as director of dashing leading man John Neville ushered in what some consider the Playhouse's golden age.

Extending the Playhouse's impressive commitment to education, Neville started a Saturday morning youth club. He introduced luncheon poetry readings and Sunday night jazz. Rising stars whom Neville directed included Dench, Alan Howard and "a very good young actor I discovered in Ipswich". Step forward Ian McKellen, then 24.

• Richard Morrison is on holiday

Counsel for the slobs

Before I start patronising Rob Becker's one-man burble for terminal blokiness, I should make some admissions. As a neo-bachelor in New York in the mid-1980s, I would get depressed by the enormous pile of dishes cluttering the sink, yet my solution was more often to surround them with anti-cockroach powder than to wash them. Then I would sprinkle the same stuff round my unmade bed and enter the Land of Nod. I can imagine my wife, dreaming of doing that and subjecting her dream to Jungian analysis, but never, ever would she do it.

What's the relevance of this to the jaunty apologia for trad maleness that Becker himself performed on Broadway but a tousled Aussie called Mark Little is playing in London? More than I would like to believe. The critic in me saw abundant evidence that Little was impersonating the sort of cheerily un-

put on plays"), but none about the significance of his six years there. "If I hadn't run Nottingham, I would never have been offered the chance to run the National."

"John Neville, Stuart Burge and I believed Nottingham was the epicentre of British theatre, more important than London. It's very difficult to imagine convincing yourself of that now, because the big companies have swallowed up so many of the resources."

By 1990 there was a chance that the Playhouse's core funding might be withdrawn. However, under the executive director Ruth Mackenzie and the artistic directors Pip Broughton and, later, Martin Duncan, the financial position and the Playhouse's profile were transformed. Mackenzie's "local/global" policy saw in-house productions take three world tours, while successful efforts to expand the core audience and bring in more people from Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities helped the Playhouse to win 1996's Prudential Award for creative innovation.

Leading European directors such as Silvius Purcaratu were invited to work with English actors for the first time, and Duncan, who will leave office after directing James Bowman and Alastair McGowan in *Endgame*, believes this internationalist approach "smashed open" local visions of theatre.

What of the Playhouse in 1999? Duncan's successor will be appointed shortly, while Venu Dhupa, the executive director, says increased attendance has helped to dent a five-figure deficit. Pending lottery approval, a major renovation of the forecourt will begin in the summer, including a large sculpture by the Turner Prize winner Anish Kapoor. Official birthday celebrations are planned for June, when says Dhupa, the foyer will contain a "large, edible installation" from which visitors can take chunks. Having funded the construction of the Playhouse, Nottingham's ratepayers will be taking a piece of it home.

• *Endgame* is at the Nottingham Playhouse from February 24 to March 10; *Krapp's Last Tape* runs from March 11 to 13 (0115-941 9419).



Touched by Tinseltown: Robert Ryan (left) as Othello and John Neville as Iago in the Nottingham Playhouse's 1967 production of *Othello*

Success at any price

30p

THE TIMES

LITTLE VOICE. OUR SHOUT.

Under the scalpel

RECITAL

Mikhail Pletnev
Merle Buckley

PLANIEST or conductor, Mikhail Pletnev is the same distinctive musician — highly intelligent, unfailingly focused, uncompromisingly ambitious in his efforts to secure not only a sharply penetrative interpretation but also an immaculate technical finish. If he values friendliness and indulgence less than surgical discipline and control, he is at least as severe in the demands he makes on himself as on the music.

Of the three composers represented in Pletnev's recital in the Bridgewater Hall, only Chopin could claim to be hard done by. The Barcarolle in F sharp minor was calculated rather than spontaneous in phrasing and the Sonata in B flat minor was seriously over-dramatised. On the other hand, the concentration, the willpower, the unfailingly direct progress through the four

movements of the latter work were extraordinarily impressive. The search for consolation in the D flat major middle section of the *Marche funèbre* was beautifully done.

Greig's complaint, if any, would have been directed not

at the performance of eight of his *Lyric Pieces* but at their presentation. It was not helpful to run them together with no clear distinction between them. Not that this was very important in comparison with Pletnev's insight into harmonies that would have been revolutionary in their time.

As for Schumann, he might have objected to the, theoretically, unacceptable text chosen for the *Etudes Symphoniques*, including pieces he had definitely rejected and excluding one he had definitely left in.

Perverse though Pletnev's selection was, however, it worked uncommonly well.

Indeed, the two rejected variations were most persuasively coloured and were integrated by the emotional intensity that prevailed throughout.

GERALD LARNER

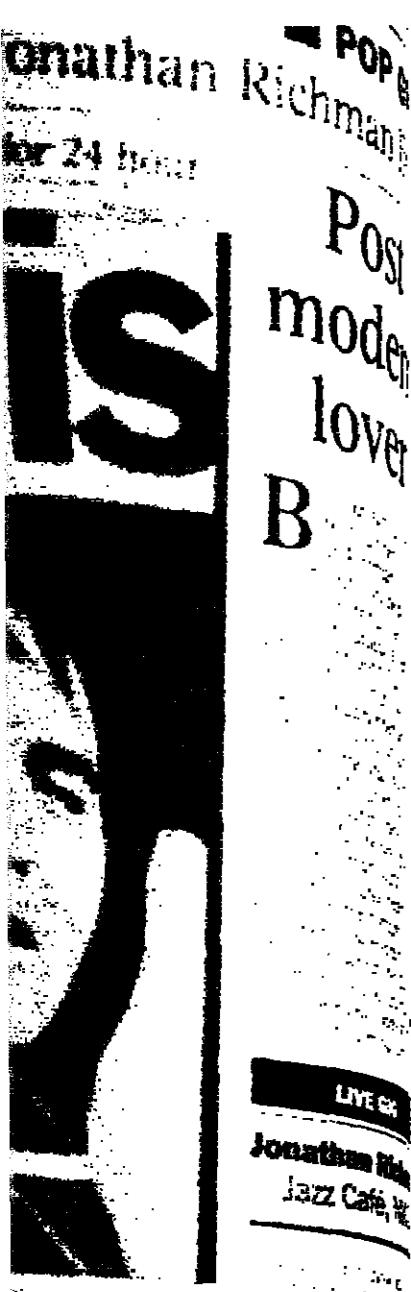
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CHANGING TIMES



■ POP ALBUMS

Sebadoh find ambition

A heart full of soul

Damon Albarn has checked in to Heartbreak Hotel and produced Blur's best album to date.

Nigel Williamson had a foretaste

In one of those twists of fate, Alan McGee was in Stockholm attending a Sony conference on the day that Blur chose to stage the world launch of their new album, *13*, in the Swedish capital.

As the head of Oasis's record label, Creation, McGee was one of the generals at the heart of the ludicrous battle of the bands waged at the zenith of Britpop a year or two ago between Britain's two premier groups. In fact, McGee was spotted neither at the Münchenbryggeriet, an old converted brewery where Blur played all but two of the songs from their new album to a music industry audience which had flown in from as far away as Brazil, Japan, and Australia; nor at the triumphant party afterwards, where Damon Albarn and what seemed like half of Sweden celebrated until dawn at the Spy Bar, Stockholm's coolest nightspot.

At the height of the battle of the bands, Oasis were deemed by most observers to have emerged comfortable winners, the coolest icons in the Cool Britannia pantheon. Listening to the new Blur album, it becomes apparent that what Oasis won was little more than a pointless skirmish over a plot of no man's land: Blur had already moved on to the breezy pop songs of *Parklife*, the only album of the mid-1990s to challenge the supremacy of Oasis. But if it wasn't already dead on its feet, Britpop is buried forever by *13*, an audacious collection of songs that makes

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much of what Blur have done in the past sound one-dimensional. It is an emotionally charged, avant-garde panoramic soundscape that seizes the initiative and will set the musical agenda well into the new millennium. In short, *13* is the album of their lives, an awesome, futuristic piece of work that feels as if they have been in training for ten years simply to make this record.

Yet it was still a bold step to play almost in its entirety an album that was completely unfamiliar to most of those present and Albarn later paid tribute to the audience. "Thank you for being so appreciative. It's not easy listening to a dozen songs you've never heard before," he said.

In fact, it had not really been difficult at all because, despite a more experimental sound coaxed out of the band by producer William Orbit (who last year assisted Madonna's latest reinvention on *Ray of Light*), the songs on *13* display an emotional commitment we have rarely heard from Blur before. There was a celebratory encore including *Beatleman*, *Poppcorn* and *Song 2* but by then we were already convinced that we had just witnessed the unveiling of the album of the year. The emotion comes from the fact that Albarn wrote many of the songs in the wake of his break-up with his long-time partner, Elastica's Justine Frischmann.

And it shows: Albarn is no longer the wryly detached observer we are familiar with from songs such as *Girls and Boys* or *Stereotype*, and you can see why he describes *13* as Blur's "soul record" — not that he sounds like Otis Redding, simply that misery always did have the best tunes and here Albarn bares it all.

The pain is there for all to hear on *Tender*, the bitter-sweet eight-minute single com-



On the couch: Blur's new album, *13*, explores the damaged soul of Damon Albarn after the break-up of his relationship with Justine Frischmann

Alternative definite article

NEW POP ALBUMS

JIMI TENOR

Organism (Warp WARP057 £14.99)

HAVING spent longer on the margins of alternative rock than it takes most groups to achieve global stardom and then fade back into obscurity, Sebadoh are showing definite signs of ambition along with the definitive article that graces their impressive seventh album, *The Sebadoh*.

The battle for the band's soul continues between singer and guitarists Lou Barlow and Jason Loewenstein, both of whom garner seven songwriting credits apiece from among the album's 15 tracks (the other one going to the band's new drummer Russ Pollard for *Break Free*, a song that sounds like an instant grunge standard).

Barlow is the more engaging singer and clearly the more accomplished writer. "I fly my flag, ever," he once declared, tongue only partly in cheek, that by 1999 Blur would be the most important band in the world. When the planet at last gets the chance to hear *13* next month, who will argue that he was not right?

● *13* is released on March 15. The single, *Tender*, is released on Monday

ic critics last year. But otherwise there are few surprises.

BARENAKED LADIES

Stunt (Reprise 9362-46963 £15.99)

THEY were once dubbed the Fat Canadian Housemartins by a wag with a kindred sense of humour, and you can see why. For Barenaked Ladies are one of those smart-alec groups who won their audi-

ence with quirky melodic hooks and a glib humour as opposed to more traditional notions of pop star cool (see also They Might Be Giants, Beautiful South and others).

Now, with the success of

their single, *One Week*, they

seem to have struck a chord in

Britain at last, and their fourth album, *Stunt*, will doubtless

appeal to those with a pen-

chant for hyperactive pop choruses harnessed to lyrics that betray a discordantly bleak

and misanthropic world view.

"If I had a gun there'd be no tomorrow" runs the jaunty *I'll Be That Girl*. Thank goodness, like most of the album, it plays better than it reads.

DAVID SINCLAIR

New life in the reeds

■ JAZZ ALBUMS

Two promising debuts

GILAD ATZMON TRIO

Take It or Leave It ... (Face Jazz FJCD1)

SINCE settling in London in the mid-1990s, the Israeli-born reedsman Gilad Atzmon has established himself as a passionately ebullient improviser, as at home with the quicksilver intricacies of bebop as the compressed energy of rock and funk. Here, on his debut CD as leader, he spearheads a muscular but supple trio — completed by the alternately whirling and singing bass of Val Manix and the tumbling drums of Sam Arntie Brown — in an intelligently varied programme of standards (*My Funny Valentine*, *These Foolish Things*, *Our Love is Here to Stay*) and powerful, scurrying originals.

Atzmon's alto playing has all the scalding intensity of, say, Jackie McLean or Kenny Garrett, but his clarinet playing is utterly distinctive: plainsong and inventive, its adaptability enables Atzmon not so much to reinterpret as entirely to reconstruct the standards upon which it is employed.

LOZ SPEYER QUARTET

Two Kinds of Blue (33 Jazz 043 CD)

ANOTHER 1990s band with an electric guitar where once a piano would have been, the Loz Speyer Quartet play sparkly, open, attractive jazz with all the punch and accessibility customarily associated with rock music. Speyer himself, on both trumpet and the slightly warmer-toned flugelhorn, packs a solid punch; guitarist Andy Jones is a confident partner, equally adept at the limber fluency associated with jazz guitar and the exuberance frequently heard from rock soloists. Propelled by the hard-driving drums of Tony Bianco and the eloquent bass of Richard Jeffries, *Two Kinds of Blue* is a promising debut.

CHRIS PARKER

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TOP TEN ALBUMS

1 (3) I've Been Expecting You	Robbie Williams (Chrysalis)
2 (1) You've Come a Long Way, Baby	Fatboy Slim (Sire)
3 (2) Talk on Corners	Cors (Atlantic)
4 (5) The Miseducation of	Lauren Hill (Columbia)
5 (4) Step One	Shaggy (Island)
6 (7) Love & Guidance - the Best of	George Michael (Sony)
7 (2) Laughter, not Forgiveness	Cors (Atlantic)
8 (1) No Exit	Blondie (RCA/Beyond)
9 (22) Love Songs	Dr Hook (EMI)
10 (13) Life Thru a Lens	Robbie Williams (Chrysalis)

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Tender

The appointment of the committee, chaired by Gavyn Davies to consider the future of the licence fee is doubly significant. It marks the sixth time in 50 years that a committee of inquiry has been set up to help to shape British broadcasting. Davies, chief international economist of Goldman Sachs, follows in the footsteps of Beveridge (who was appointed in 1949 and reported in 1951), Pilkington (1962), Annan (1977), Hunt (1982) and Peacock (1986).

If the gap since Peacock is not quite the longest in this sequence, it should be noted that Annan was originally appointed in 1970 and had to wait for Labour to return to office in 1974 before he was allowed to resume his work. The revival of the inquiry mechanism by Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, is both timely and welcome. Each of those five reports heralded major changes in British broadcasting. Beveridge led — indirectly — to the launch of ITV in 1955, Pilkington to the launch of BBC2 in 1964 and Annan to the launch of

Lessons of the past for BBC's future

The Davies committee must have a vision for Auntie's destiny, says David Elstein, chief executive of Channel 5

of reference. Those who assume his report will automatically adopt his previously published views should remember that the Peacock Committee was dominated by exponents of the free market, but rejected advertising and sponsorship as replacements for the licence fee, preferring subscription, but only in the long term.

The other key significance of the Davies inquiry is that it takes the licence fee out of contention. It is safe until at least 2006, and probably beyond — even the most enthusiastic supporter of subscription knows it cannot play a substantial role until the vast majority of TV sets have converted to digital. By

the time Sir John Birt's successor takes office, Davies will have reported and the Government will have decided the future funding of the BBC well into the next decade — the first time that a Labour administration will have been responsible for such a fundamental structural decision based on a committee of inquiry's recommendations.

With the funding question off the agenda, the key question facing Birt's successor will be how the BBC operates as a public sector broadcaster in a competitive commercial world: by 2006, there could well be 12 million multi-channel homes. The scope and limitations of the market, the nature of

the public interest and the role of public service broadcasting in the modern age, the interface between the public broadcaster and the commercial world, the challenge of digital, the need for accountability, the task of delivering and demonstrating value for money — all these must be fully understood by any new Director-General.

Equally important will be a deep knowledge of the creative process, reinvigorating creative morale, a strong sense of the BBC's unique heritage and an ability to recuperate the trust and affection of the licence payers who have enabled the BBC to become what it is — the most respected public broadcaster

in the world and the most important cultural institution in Britain.

The Davies report and the new Director-General must have a vision of the future that will serve the BBC for decades, not just till 2006.

The Hunt and Peacock reports of the 1980s seemed to mark the end of the old, closely regulated system of broadcasting that persisted for more than 60 years.

The effective end of spectrum scarcity — with the growth of cable, satellite and now digital — determined an entire rationale of carefully controlled expansion that culminated in the creation of a Channel 4 designed to serve a supplementary, rather than a directly competitive, role in UK broadcasting.

Governments and regulators concentrated more on laying down the rules of the game than on defining the shape of the pitch.

Of late, though, managing spectrum has returned to fashion. Digital terrestrial TV has allowed ministers and regulatory bodies once again to draw up a broadcasting map and place the BBC at the heart of it. The centrality of the BBC — all the more emphatic should Channel 4 eventually be privatised — explains why the Davies Committee is so important and offers us a line of continuity that can be traced to Beveridge 50 years ago — and, indeed, back to 1922.

The lessons of that history are still relevant today. The BBC's past is connected to its future. That future must be the concern of every citizen, every consumer of broadcast services and every participant in the cultural life of Britain.

• The author will deliver six lectures on the political structure of post-war British broadcasting to the Oxford University English faculty as the 1999 News International Visiting Professor in Broadcast Media. The lectures will be on February 23 and 25 and March 2, 4, 9 and 11.

'We won't shoot you. They may'

Raymond Snoddy previews Peter Taylor's TV series on Ulster loyalists

The senior Provisional IRA man sipped his tea in the Andersonstown Community Centre and asked the television journalist Peter Taylor what his next project was after *Provos*, his illuminating study of the republican paramilitaries. Taylor, who has been going to Northern Ireland for more than 25 years, said he was going to try to do the loyalists next. "He smiled," says Taylor, "and said 'Be careful. We wouldn't shoot you, but they would.'"

Taylor does not know what extent the IRA man was joking, but the reaction was an indication of the likely difficulties, if not dangers, of persuading the Protestant paramilitaries to talk to the camera about what they had done and why they felt compelled to do it.

The loyalist side has largely been untold because most journalists didn't want to tell it and, more importantly, the community and paramilitaries have not wanted to tell it. They have been deeply suspicious of journalists, particularly the BBC, says Taylor, a contract journalist employed by the Corporation.

Curiously enough, making *Provos* helped Taylor to get close to the loyalist paramilitaries: "Almost without exception they had seen *Provos*. It was virtually required viewing. These were the people they had been trying to

the media interview

and be named. One of the most horrific stories Taylor tells concerns Billy Giles from East Belfast. In retaliation for an IRA murder of a Sunday school teacher, he shot a young Roman Catholic workmate, who had been to his home, simply because he was the most available target.

Taylor met Giles in the Maze Prison, where he was serving a life sentence, kept in touch as he completed an Open University degree, and then on his release helped with the rehabilitation of other loyalist prisoners. But last September Giles ended it all. One night he sat down, wrote a moving testament and then hanged



In *Loyalists* Taylor explores the motives behind the violence. "They set out to kill Catholics to put pressure on the IRA"

himself, unable to live with the memory of what he had done.

Another ordinary-looking man, who could be anybody's neighbour, tells how he was ordered to kill a Catholic, any Catholic, after an IRA bomb killed six Protestant pensioners in Coleraine. Jim Light was sentenced for shooting a 17-year-old student just because he was a Catholic in the wrong place at the wrong time. Taylor asks Light in the film if he hesitated before pulling the trigger. "No hesitation," Light replies.

One of Taylor's recent tasks has been to telephone the relatives of victims, such as the mother of the dead student, to warn them what will be on the screen when *Loyalists* begins on Sunday. Key loyalist politicians are also interviewed, including Bill Craig, the former Unionist minister, unrepentant about his hard line when the Troubles reigned. The Rev Ian Paisley, and David Trimble, the leader of the Northern

Ireland Assembly. In making the series, apart from telling "an untold story", Taylor wanted to challenge the stereotype of the loyalists as bigots in bowler hats always saying "no", and explore the motives behind the loyalist violence that led to the deaths of more than 1,000 Catholics, most with no paramilitary connections.

"The main lesson is that loyalist violence was not mindless. They deliberately set out to kill Catholics to put pressure on the IRA. They believed it worked, although that is debatable," says Taylor, who was sent to Northern Ireland on his first television assignment for ITV's *This Week* in the aftermath of the Bloody Sunday shootings in 1972. He arrived in the Bogside in Londonderry on the evening of the killings by the British Army, when you could "cut the silence with a knife", and started knocking on doors in the expectation of being denounced

as a murdering Brit. Instead he was invited in and offered tea and cake as local residents described what had happened.

In his journalistic career Taylor has covered everything from American politics to wars in Africa and the Middle East. But, having made more than 50 documentaries on Northern Ireland, he is almost reconciled as being best known as the Yorkshireman who has done more than anyone to explain the complexities of Northern Ireland to his fellow Englishmen — quite apart from illuminating the Province's warring tribes to each other.

After giving a talk about the making of *Provos* in the nationalist Ardoyne district of Belfast, he was amused to be approached by a man who asked: "Is that community a mirror image of ours?" Taylor suggested that he watch the programmes, although the answer is yes.

Taylor does not regret spending

so much of his career on one story. "It has dominated our political lives throughout the 20th century, and the past 30 years in particular. I do it because it is not over yet," says Taylor, a quietly spoken Cambridge history graduate. His aim is not, he says, to glorify violence or political terrorism, merely to recognise that it exists. "It is an attempt to explain why it exists, how it might end and to remind people what suffering means," adds Taylor, who also wants to mark the transformation that has taken the loyalist extremists from violence to the Good Friday agreement.

For Taylor, going to the province is like going home. One day he hopes to make a documentary about a Northern Ireland finally at peace with itself.

• *Loyalists* begins on BBC2 on Sunday at 8pm. *Loyalists*, by Peter Taylor, is published by Bloomsbury, £16.99.



Vanessa Feltz feels she is the victim of a media witch-hunt

Tabloids smirk as BBC squirms over 'fake' guests

BBC chiefs have only themselves to blame for the Vanessa fiasco

It is hard not to feel a twinge of sympathy for Vanessa Feltz, the gormless BBC talk-show host who woke up one morning to find she was playing the lead role in one of the most ridiculous farces in BBC history.

The studio "guests" who appeared on *The Vanessa Show* to share their harrowing stories of obesity and sex addiction turned out to be a motley collection of bit-actors and commenters who had been supplied by an agent and were willing to talk any old rubbish to get three minutes of glory on daytime TV.

That revelation by *The Mirror* has caused a public confidence crisis for our state broadcaster which will not abate for some time. Every national newspaper and even the BBC's own *Newsnight* have followed the story, calling for heads to roll. Alan Yentob, Director of BBC Television, is personally overseeing an internal inquiry into the fiasco which has already resulted in the suspension of two producers and a researcher from the show.

Feltz, who was ignorant of the scam and proclaims herself "horrified", is aghast at the vehemence of press reaction. Dozens of pages have been devoted to the story, ridiculing the BBC and demanding that her "trailer trash" show be scrapped.

Sources say she feels it is a "personal witch-hunt" but Feltz is in fact irrelevant. Why is

Mirror says: "The BBC seems to think it is on a higher plane to the rest of us but this has shown it is just chasing ratings like everybody else. There is a subtle irony in the fact that the BBC, that most self-important of institutions, has been caught with its trousers down by a tabloid which has suffered years of sneers and jeers from the supposed pure end of the media market."

"We run real-life case studies every day. The idea that we would pay an agency to supply them is unthinkable. But we now find that the BBC, with its grand charter, has been doing so, which shows appalling hypocrisy."

Even loyal BBC insiders are finding that it's difficult to muster a defence. Meanwhile, many tabloid reporters are smirking with quiet satisfaction. They cite examples of being sent on doorstepping jobs only to find television crews already there. Within seconds they would find themselves being filmed knocking on doors and would see the footage

used later to illustrate the intrusiveness of the press.

But there is a far more serious issue at stake than point-scoring between journalists, and it has far-reaching implications for the future of the BBC. The real question is not whether researchers knew that their guests were fake when they hired them, but why the BBC commissioned such a dreadful programme in the first place.

Common sense tells us that the British are not the type to bare their souls readily on television. It is a culture that belongs to America and programmes such as *The Jerry Springer Show* and it should not be encouraged here, least of all by the BBC.

If producers make ridiculous demands on their researchers such as "Find me three women under 25 who have slept with more than 300 men by 4pm" then what do they really expect? If they want to exploit people from the gutter they should not be surprised to find themselves being exploited in return.

A number of minnows will no doubt be sacked for this embarrassing episode. Meanwhile, many tabloid reporters are smirking with quiet satisfaction. They cite examples of being sent on doorstepping jobs only to find television crews already there. Within seconds they would find themselves being filmed knocking on doors and would see the footage

used later to illustrate the intrusiveness of the press.

• *GETTING THE BUSINESS*: Somerfield and Kwik Save supermarket pick Leo Burnett for £14 million ad account; low-calorie lager Bud Light to be launched in Britain with £4.2 million press and poster campaign by BMP DDB; Universal McCann spearheads £1 million campaign for Gonzalez Byass to improve the image of sherry (Marketing); IFC Magazines splits £10 million media budget between Mediacom TMB and Walker Media (Media Week); Esso to overhaul European advertising and marketing, currently handled by McCann-Erickson; Airtours reviews its media arrangements, now with Media Principles; Evans Hunt Scott to handle relaunch of financial services provider M&G; Young & Rubicam win £60 million global account for Barilla foods (Campaign).

MICHAEL LEAPMAN

Do we care about the truth?

Our fears over genetically modified foods have been fuelled by a media frenzy and inaccurate reporting, says Science Editor Nigel Hawkes

The scare over genetically modified food has been a classic example of a little-studied phenomenon, the media feeding frenzy. From small starts, frenzies quickly develop a terrible momentum. Sense and judgment are the first casualties: public understanding the final victim. For as long as it lasts, readers and viewers are buried in a blizzard of stories that compete to paint apocalyptic visions of horrors to come. Politicians shamelessly join in. Then, like a tap being turned off, it stops.

Absolutely the first example in my experience was the flesh-eating bug which transfixed the press in the summer of 1994. This was a strain of *Streptococcus* capable of killing those unlucky enough to be infected with it. There was nothing new about the organism or the symptoms it caused, which had been beautifully described in a surgical journal by a doctor working in Shanghai as long ago as 1919. Nor was there any real evidence of an epidemic, or even a significant increase in the number of cases. Yet for a week or two the flesh-eating bug made huge headlines. Then it was gone — and hardly a word has appeared on the subject since.

The GM-food frenzy was triggered by a two-page spread in *The Guardian* on February 12, claiming that tests on GM potatoes had damaged rats which had eaten them. Curiously, an almost identical article which had appeared in *The Mail on Sunday* at the end of January had passed unnoticed.

The *Guardian* article, despite its length, did not address two key issues: that the GM potatoes tested were not intended as

Readers are buried in a blizzard of horror stories

human food, and would never have passed muster as such; and that the gene inserted into them was for a toxin. Small wonder, perhaps, that they might have had damaging effects on the rats, though whether they actually did is still in dispute. By all normal journalistic standards, the story was holed below the waterline.

But it made no difference. The controversy quickly took wing, sprouting subplots and generating a tremendous row more or less about nothing. As it happens, GM foods have been better monitored and controlled in Britain than anywhere else in the world. Small trial plots are all that have been planted. No ill-effects to health have been observed, nor are they likely. Possible environmental effects are being carefully monitored. Is this the impression left by the row? I think not.

Frenzies are caused partly by bad reporting, but could only happen in an environment ripe for them. We live in a society increasingly anxious about risks, real and imaginary, as the sociologist Frank Furedi has pointed out in his book *The Culture of Fear*. He cites a study of the medical literature which showed that in the five-year period between 1967 and 1972, about 1,000 articles containing the word risk were published. In the period between 1986 and 1991, there were 80,000 such articles.

Had risks increased eightyfold in such a short time? Clearly not. We live in a far less risky time than our parents or grandparents. Today fewer than one woman in 10,000 dies in childbirth: in 1940, one in 300 did. The disappearance of the Soviet Union is the greatest risk reduction in our lifetimes: but better drugs, a more plentiful diet, social securi-



A protester objecting to the planting of genetically modified oil seed rape. "Frenzies quickly develop a terrible momentum."

ty and other changes have also cut the ordinary risks of life.

What has changed is attitude to risk. At a time when most risks are actually declining, people are worrying more. But they lack the skill to assess risks, to develop a true calculus of risk in which real dangers are distinguished from mere scares. Driving a car is far more dangerous than flying, but we seldom hear of people with driving-phobia.

The second reason comes closer to home for journalists. It

sounds pompous to say so, but today's journalists are not much interested in the truth. As the American academic Peter Sandman of Rutgers University in New York puts it: "In the epistemology of routine journalism, there is no truth, or at least no way to determine truth. There are only conflicting claims, to be covered as fairly as possible."

So journalists feel they have done their job if they quote both sides of an argument, "tossing the hot potato of truth into the lap

of the audience". As Sandman says, This approach has the effect of giving all sources equal value, of making the most outrageous claims seem credible — and a lot more interesting — than the sober responses elicited from official sources.

Nobody would want to deny a hearing to those opposed to GM foods, but crying wolf is seldom sensible, unless a wolf is truly at the door. If one believed all the scares floated by environmentalists and health campaigners, one

would never set foot out of doors, though, of course, that would still leave one the option of falling down stairs.

Newspapers that join in a feeding frenzy put their reputations at risk and earn the contempt of readers who know about the subject. Worse, they help to create an atmosphere of fear which could threaten the forces which have made life less risky in the past century. Fortunately, I suspect that most readers treat frenzies with the disdain they deserve.

A sense of style for our Times

Why good English still matters to a few of us

A study of the style books used by sub-editors of *The Times* in the past 50 years shows that some injunctions never change. One is over the use of that very over-worked word "very".

"Very — there was a time when 'very' was not allowed in *The Times* and it would be a good rule to restore. 'Very' hardly ever strengthens an adjective and often exaggerates. A very cold wind is in all probability only a cold wind: not Arctic. We might save two or three columns yearly by excluding 'very'. But in giving up 'very' we must not turn to 'most' or 'highly' or similar words by way of compensation."

That was written by the Editor, William Haley, in *The Times Style Book* of 1953.

"Very — its constant use inflates language without strengthening its meaning," said the style book of 1992. "Always delete 'very' and then see if it is really needed. That said, do not strip your writing of all idioms. 'She seems very English to me.' Nice? Not very." The injunction remains in *The Times Guide to English Style and Usage*, compiled by Tim Austin and published as a book this week, though it is put more briefly: "Very — one of the most overworked words in English. Always try to omit."

Apart from writing more concisely, contemporary editors are less authoritarian. The style guide is precisely that — a guide not a straitjacket, says Peter Stothard, the Editor. Some spellings or constructions are a matter of choice: the rejected usages are not necessarily wrong. Stothard would argue that Haley was prescribing rules for a different audience in a different age: the public school elite of 50 years ago.

Sport, TV, music did not matter so much to Haley whose audience was also older. Rules of grammar and spelling must still be prescribed, he says, but what is correct English for William Rees-Mogg or a leader writer will be different for sport or music columnists.

Haley devoted 250 words to the termination *ise* or *ize*, arguing that *ise* should be preserved in its proper place.

Both *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* now opt for *ise* in the space of one or two lines.

Younger readers, many not taught English grammar, may wonder why fuddy-duddy editors still worry about style. They hear the English language spoken carelessly on radio and their parents swearing like troopers: and, as Keith Waterhouse has noted, bad language is the authentic English of the moment.

So why should newspapers bother? One reason is that with 30 million readers a day newspapers remain the guardians of the style and usage of the world's main common language. Another is that readers who do know the rules are intensely irritated by sloppy spelling and punctuation. A house style, as *The Daily Telegraph Style Book* puts it, provides conformity and imbues the newspaper with individuality. All newspapers share its ambitions for accuracy, immediacy, clarity and readability.

Both *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* remain prescriptive about clichés.

Among those which *The Times* resists are backlash, blueprint, bombshell, chaos, clampdown, consensus, crackdown, major, mega, nighmare and shock and situation.

The Daily Telegraph singles out "partner" for special odium: "Use girlfriend, boyfriend, companion, lover, mistress, concubine, friend or any other apposite word." It also bans prior to, bubbly, gunned down, blasted, mystery callers, perverted Scout leaders, frall grannies, disgraced managers, and innocent victims.

Style is one matter: taste another. One area where newspapers, particularly the tabloids, have deliberately lagged behind popular convention is over the use of four-letter words. At *The Times* and *Telegraph*, use of the F word always has to be referred upwards. At *The Times* it is allowed infrequently and only within quotations; otherwise it becomes *etc.* None of the tabloids uses either the F or C words, though other obscenities are allowed with asterisks.

But what editors are prepared to print is undoubtedly changing, especially on arts pages. As Waterhouse noted in the *British Journalism Review*, some broadsheets — he singled out *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Independent* and *The Sunday Times* — now have the vocabulary of Billingsgate porters.

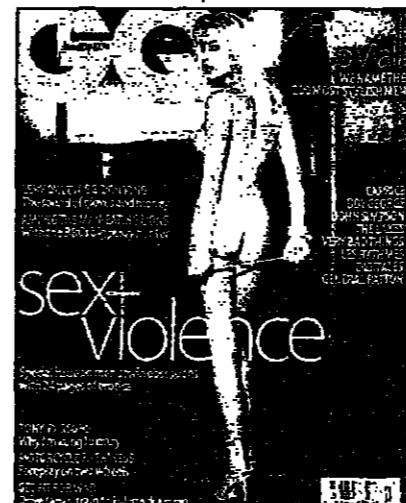
• *The Guide* can be ordered from *The Times Bookshop* (0990-13459) for £9.99.



James Brown revelling in his role last year as Editor of GQ

How Brown self-destructed

Carol Midgley on the rise and fall of the original lad



The GQ issue that went too far

One year ago James Brown, the original lad, announced his drink and drugs days were over and that he had finally grown up.

Becoming Editor of *GQ*, he said, felt like coming home. Conde Nast was the best company he had ever worked for and he had "never been happier".

Yesterday, however, the love affair was in ruins. A strangely worded statement from Conde Nast said Brown had resigned by mutual consent over "philosophical differences" about the magazine's content.

What it really meant was that Nicholas Coleridge, managing director of the company, was incensed by the latest issue of *GQ* in which Brown listed the Nazis and Field Marshal Rommel in a roll call of the "sharpest men of the 20th century".

Rommel, who led the Nazi campaign in North Africa, is pictured in the uniform that Hitler chose for him, alongside Charles Laughton and Sammy Davis Jr in the bracket of men who showed "style in the face of true bravery".

Predictably, the article caused a storm of protest from Jewish groups, which insiders say was seen to damage the respectable image of *The Gentleman's Quarterly*.

His case was not helped by a series of semi-pornographic photographs in the same issue, one featuring a naked woman apparently stabbed and tied up in a blood-filled bath.

Conde Nast insiders said the general feeling was that Brown had overstepped the mark, naively believing that he was invincible.

Other colleagues who have known him longer, however, said it was only a matter of time before he pressed the "explode" button that has characterised both his genius and his capacity for destruction.

Imitators such as *FHM* and *Maxim* were soon spawned, selling more than

established women's glossies such as *Elle* and *Cosopolitan*.

But it was when Brown was invited to reverse the fortunes of the ailing *GQ* that he cleaned up his act, went teetotal and declared that *Loaded* and *FHM* were for kids, not him.

He began wearing Savile Row suits and married his girlfriend, Caz, while setting up a magazine about his beloved Leeds United football team.

But although he managed to halt the scale of the decline, *GQ* did not pile on the sales that Conde Nast had hoped for. Most recent figures show it was selling 130,152 — way below its peak of 148,000.

Conde Nast apparently thought it was being brought too downmarket. Brown argued that he was making it cool and contemporary.

The statement from Nicholas Coleridge read: "During James's editorship the magazine's circulation has grown and he brought energy and humour to the editorial mix. He is a talented editor. We like him. Unfortunately, philosophical differences have arisen between James and Conde Nast over some aspects of the magazine's content. We have agreed to disagree."

A new editor is now being sought. Early names in the frame are Simon Hills and Dylan Jones.

Brown's statement added simply: "I have enjoyed my 18 months at *GQ*. The team and I have built a dynamic, modern men's magazine. It has been a great project and I'm looking forward to my next challenge."

Yesterday Brown spent the day with his lawyers. It is thought that since he secured a water-tight contract when he joined in 1997, he will receive a substantial pay-off.

Fleet Street tussles to tell a tale of Alastair Campbell



MEDIA DIARY

DON'T shoot the messenger, write a book about him. Three hopeful scribes are now lining up to pen a biography of Alastair Campbell, the Downing Street cheerleader. Peter Osborne, *The Express* columnist, has a start in that he has actually signed a contract with Atrium Press. He expects his "unauthorised" work ("Alastair told me to bugger off," he admits) to be ready in time for the party conferences.

Eric Jacobs, biographer and drinking chum of the late Kingsley Amis, hopes to sign a contract soon, but awaits a reply to his letter to Campbell, a colleague on *Eddy Shah's Today* in 1986 — seeking his view on the project.

Contender number three is Anne McElvoy, of *The Inde-*

pendent, who plans a book on new Labour but concedes that she might shift its focus to Campbell. She and Jacobs hope to persuade him to co-operate, to balance any evil insinuations from the right-wing Osborne, but the precedent is discouraging. Peter Mandelson gave Donald Macintyre a hand, to try to soften the impact of Paul Routledge's biography, but in vain: he has had to resign and the Macintyre tome has yet to appear.

■ I WISH the *Express* newspapers would stop fidgeting. This week the old *Sunday Express*, after 18 months as the spanking new *The Express on Sunday*, went back to calling itself the *Sunday Express*, shedding readers with each new skin. Summoned to

explain this on BBC radio last Sunday, Michael Pilgrim, its executive editor, was asked why his paper (circulation 1,009,683) does so much worse than *The Mail on Sunday* (2,291,247).

"*The Mail on Sunday*" is, he said, "full of hatred and revengefulness." Unlike the *Sunday Express*, so dripping with sweetness, that Peter Osborne (see above) described Tony Blair this week as "morally repugnant and utterly

damnable", while fellow-columnist Ann Widdecombe wondered if the Viagra-prescribing Dr Howard Stowe was "too daft to be an MP".

■ GARDENERS know how important breeding is, so the *Independent on Sunday* is right to go for reliable stock in its choice of a new gardening correspondent. She is Sarah Raven, who used to write feelingly about flower arranging for *The Daily Telegraph*. Her

husband, Adam Nicolson, is not only the grandson of Vita Sackville-West, creator of the famous garden at Sissinghurst, but the brother of Rebeca Nicolson, deputy editor of *The Independent on Sunday*. So that's what is meant by a family newspaper.

■ AS head of ITV's daytime programming, Dianne Neelmes has been in the thick of the row over fake guests on *Trisha*, so she thought to relax last Sunday by taking her husband to the charity performance of *The Vagina Monologues* at the Old Vic.

On the way out she was accosted by a young man who said that he was from *The Express*, seeking her reaction to Tony Blair's speech on stage.

When she demurred he as-

sured her: "It's all right, you can use a false name if you like." No mention of a £100 fee, though.

■ MY only appearance on *Kilroy* was on April Fool's Day three years ago, when the subject was hoaxes. I had written an article denouncing the japes played on readers and television viewers on April 1, so my role on the show was to be the spoilsport. I did it so well that I was booted by the other guests, who told stories of incredible hoaxes that they had perpetrated or suffered. Inevitably, the producers inserted their own joke — a Eurocrat talking about a Brussels initiative to standardise humour — but he was more credible than the allegedly real people.



Biography target: Alastair Campbell with Tony Blair

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Selling a dream

We are endlessly fascinated with other people's homes, says Grace Bradberry

There are days when I stand amid the falling masonry, exposed pipework and peeling paint of my new flat, and wonder if this might just represent "shabby chic". In my heart I know that even with the lights off and the walls glummed only by street lamp there is no way that this phrase, coined by Min Hogg to characterise the style of *World of Interiors* (which she edits), can be applied to my little pit in North London. But that is the point of interiors magazines — you can always dream.

We have become a nation of dreamers when it comes to our homes. Just look at the statistics for what is known as the "home interest" magazine market. Since 1989, the total circulation of all such titles in Britain has grown by 84 per cent. We now buy 2.5 million a month. Our appetite for pictures of other people's homes, with suitably revealing text, seems insatiable. Few of these magazines are entirely unpalatable. Nevertheless, some taste better than others, and *World of Interiors* is a truffle among the mushrooms.

With a circulation of 70,128, it is by no means a big seller (*House & Garden*, also part of the Condé Nast stable, sells 163,313). Yet the latest ABC circulation figures show that sales have risen year on year — by half a per cent — and this at a time when we seem to be on the brink of recession. Launched as *Interiors* in 1981, it is the child of Min Hogg, still its Editor. But the man instrumental in its commercial success is Tony Willett, who joined in 1982 and became its publisher in 1989. Having started as a sales-

We come across many houses that are ghastly'

man, Willett has done a great job of flogging this rather rarefied magazine to advertisers and the public. While Min Hogg's own home has featured in the magazine, Willett would never dream of putting his own forward. He lives in a mock-Tudor house in a leafy Surrey street leading down to fields. Mock Tudor has a bad name, but this was its acceptable face, a beautiful light 1920s house, with elegant windows and attractive woodwork. It is surrounded by a large garden, in which Willett and his wife

Ann, a journalist, have built their own gazebo. They have also rag-rolled the bedroom walls, papered the dining room a deep red, and filled the house with luxurious textiles. It is not though, the sort of house to appear in *World of Interiors*, where the ethos is of rooms with "the edges knocked off them", as he puts it.

World of Interiors is not really a showcase for the world of leading interior designers. It is more about one-off properties touched by personal taste and idiosyncrasy. I had assumed that men of Willett's age (he is 54) were probably the target market, and that my friends and I merely sad voyeurists. Not so. "The main age group is 20 to 44-year-olds, weighted to 20 to 34-year-olds," he says.

His own theory for this is: "There's a time when you grow out of experimentation, minimalism, having nothing to sit on, sleeping standing up. By middle age you should have decided what you want to do. And the older one gets, the more traditional one becomes." In *World of Interiors*, fading grand-



Tony Willett, publisher of *World of Interiors*, at home. He has taken a rarefied magazine to the masses

deur is more the magazine's style. The homes of pop stars and actresses rarely feature. There were rumours that Min Hogg had turned down Meg and Noel Gallagher's opulent pad, though Willett claims ignorance of this. He does admit: "We come across so many houses that are ghastly. They have had millions of pounds spent on them and they look dreadful."

Yet you would need if not millions, then several hundred thou-

sand to buy most of the properties featured in the magazine. Even so, it is, apparently, more accessible than it was.

"In the early days it was like a Lamborghini — so rarefied that few people even aspired to it," says Willett. "Now it has retained that up-market style while being approachable and inspirational."

In addition to the succulent interiors there are merchandising features, and this is where the accessi-

bility comes in. "You'll find fabric there from £3 a metre up to £300 — in the old days it was more the equivalent of £150 up."

Willett wonders where it will all end. "The home interest market has grown to such an extent that it's almost inconceivable that there could be more magazine launches in 1999 — yet I know there are. Whether the industry can go on supporting even more home interest magazines, I don't know."

The year of living Monica

Reporters addicted to the scandal are now bereft, says Ian Brodie

Suddenly Washington is fresh out of scandal. The awful realisation is dawning on legions of journalists in the American capital that the biggest political soap opera of their careers is over.

At first there was a sense of relief when President Clinton was acquitted of impeachment charges by the Senate last Friday. As senators raced to the airport for flights home, journalists adjourned to Capitol Hill watering holes to celebrate their escape from the gruelling demands of the year-long airing of laundry.

Promises were made to return to the normal pattern of life before Monica Lewinsky intruded. Fultering relationships would be repaired, children would be taken to soccer games. Everyone could at last take it easy. Then the reality of life after Monica began to sink in.

What could one do that would be so intriguing, challenging, competitive and shot through with sexual high jinks in the White House? Somehow, plans for saving pensions or cutting taxes would lack the compulsive fascination of presidential perjury over a "certain kind of sex", as the more fastidious papers and networks, initially called oral sex. Maybe a war would help.

Reporters made and others faltered during the Year of Living Monica. Talk shows on cable television regularly devoted themselves to Monica all evening. Chris Matthews on CNBC's *Hardball* outshouted the rest. His colleague Geraldo Rivera remained steadfastly pro-Clinton and is seeking an exclusive interview as his reward.

Two legal analysts on CNN, Greta Van Susteren and Roger Cossack, kept their heads amid the hubbub and drew the distinction between allegations and

findings of guilt on their programme *Burden of Proof*. There was a rash of Clinton-baiting blondes, led by Laura Ingraham on MSNBC, who discussed testicles and other appearances with a candour seldom heard on daytime television. Matt Drudge made his name by peddling Sexgate gossip on his swamp-dwelling website. What can he do for an encore?

At least Chief Justice William Rehnquist has his day job back at the Supreme Court. He will be remembered for the gold rings on the sleeves of his robe, an addition he made after admiring the costume worn by the Lord Chancellor in *Gilbert and Sullivan's Iolanthe*. "It's a good thing he didn't see *La Cage aux Folles*," quipped Mark Russell, a Washington satirist.

The Sunday network chat shows fussed on Monica week after week. Jonathan Turley, a law professor at George Washington University, appeared on at least one of the programmes for ten weeks in a row. His achievement was overshadowed by William Ginsburg, Monica's first lawyer, who was on all five shows in one day, a record that may stand for ever.

One fifth of the Senate, 20 members in all, were chat-show guests on the final Sunday before Mr Clinton's acquittal.

Print reporters filled acres of newsprint in hopes of becoming the new Woodward and Bernstein of Watergate fame. But there were too many leaks and too much competition for lone stars to shine. So, goodbye saturation coverage.

To be sure, there may be new legal grenades from Kenneth Starr. But unless either of the Clintons is put in legal jeopardy, the big headlines are over.

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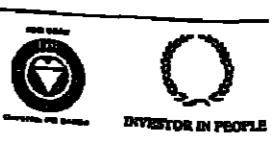
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History repeats itself

Reporting on refugees does not change, says Dominic Kennedy

Guess when this headlined appeared in the *Daily Mail*? "So-Called Refugees Disgraceful scenes" Or this one in *The Sun*? "We're being swamped by 'crimewaves of migrants'". Or is it the *Daily Mail*? "Refugees rising". Or this, the *Daily Mail* again, "Refugees Pouring Into This Country".

The years are 1900, 1998, 1999 and 1938. That's appearing in March, 38 — actually read: "Germans Pouring Into This Country".

The popular press in Britain today, in particular the *Daily Mail*, has taken its teeth into refugees. They are the new scapegoat, a other immigrants including black people, were before them. Amazingly, the stories now being reported about Kosovans, Somalis and Gypsies are exactly the same talepeddled by the mass-circulation newspapers to a stir upon Jews early this century. The language is the same. The metaphors are identical.

The argument is the same. The press portrays asylum seekers as criminals, scroungers

it is considering financing media initiatives to counter the mood of tabloid hysteria.

Just what are the stories that have served the press so well that they are still being vigorously reported, despite the fact that they have been stale for 100 years or so?

The *Daily Mail* report in 1900 told of the landing in Southampton of 600 "so-called refugees", their passage paid by the port's Lord Mayor's Fund. "Upon the testimony of the ship's officers, there was scarce a hundred of them that had, by right, deserved such help, and these were the Englishmen of the party," it read.

"The rest were Jews. The ship seemed alive with them. The manner of Jews... fought and jostled... They had breakfasted well on board but rushed as though starving at the food... Then, incredible as it may seem... THEY BEGAN TO GAMBLE...

These were the penniless refugees, and when the Relief Committee passed by them hid their gold as they fawned and whined, and in broken English, asked for money for their train fare."

A ship's officer tells the *Daily Mail* that the supposedly penniless refugees deposited thousands of pounds with the captain. Mrs Lacine Thompson, the matron, tells the reporter: "There are certainly some among the Jews who have ample means and are

TAKING A CHEAP TRIP." She adds: "They were threatening to knife me."

Compare that with the press coverage today. "So-called refugees" have become "bogus refugees" or "economic migrants". The *Daily Mail* has written 37 articles about bogus refugees since 1995. Instead of the Lord Mayor's Fund, it is the welfare state which is now accused of naively supporting them. *The Sun*: "Bogus asylum seekers won a £50,000

lottery handout yesterday — to teach them how to milk our benefits system."

Fighting/jostling. *The Mirror*: "A riot broke out yesterday between African and Romanian refugees waiting to collect social welfare payments."

Broken English. *News of the World*: "Unable to work and speaking little English, [asylum seekers] mill around waiting for state handouts."

Taking a cheap trip. *Daily Mail*: "Fury erupted over the 'scandal' of a Labour-run council forkling our around £120-a-week a head for [asylum seekers]... to stay at a picturesue holiday camp on the Welsh coast."

Threatening to knife matron. *Daily Mail*: "Brutal crimes of the asylum seekers... At least 44 major trials... have ended in the conviction of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants... 17 were rape, attempted rape or serious sexual assault, and five were mur-

MARY 3, 1900.

SO-CALLED REFUGEES DISGRACEFUL SCENES CHESHIRE.

REMARKABLE STORY OF THE SHIP'S OFFICERS.

"Daily Mail" Special.

There landed yesterday at Southampton from the transport "Cheshire" over 600 so-called refugees, their passage paid out of the Lord Mayor's Fund upon the unambiguous testimony of the officers; there was scarce a hundred of them that had, by right, deserved such help, and these were the Englishmen of the party.

There were, all manner of jostling for the ways; they rushed into the tropic South African, and the Mayor of London, from the London, had provided free breakfasts well, as though stars, and brushed the scum off the sea, if they were to be washed away, the children, to push, they jostled, and they spilled the coffee, and they spilled the tea, and they spilled the water, and they spilled the mouth, and they fought for places in the steerage, the women and children to take their chance behind.

Then, incredible as it may seem, they began to gamble.

They pick-pocketed, begged, and got legal advice.

They were, however, given a free passage, and the Lord Mayor's Fund.

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THE TIMES
EDUCATION

Choosing a perfect school

Good primary education does not depend solely on results, says Fred Redwood

Parents who are choosing a primary school for their children will be particularly interested in the national test results to be published in *The Times* on Tuesday. The tables are easy to understand: just keep Level 4 in mind as the expected level for children of 11.

However, it would be unwise for parents to opt automatically for the school with the highest percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 or above. At the primary stage, children often learn as many basic skills at home as they do at school. Consequently, a school with excellent results in literacy, for example, may harbour some uninspiring teachers nonetheless.

It should also be noted that there has been much criticism of results at the higher key stages: it is quite likely that Tuesday's results will reveal similar anomalies.

So how should parents go about finding a good primary school? A fundamental rule is to visit each school during a normal working day.

Most schools hold open evenings, which feature displays of work by their pupils. Attending these functions may be interesting but such staged events should be treated with the scepticism with which you would approach any other promotional activity.

To gain a realistic picture of a school's strengths and weaknesses you need to witness normal lessons. Go about arranging a date but remember, on the day, to consider how much status is being afforded your visit. Be wary if you are rushed through the school in half an hour with time only for a cursory glance at lessons in progress.

Be aware of the learning environment. Children work better in pleasant surroundings and they receive encouragement when they see their work displayed on the walls. Ask about the layout of each classroom. Are there helpful signs posted indicating where everything is kept? There should be.

Do not, however, assume that colourful collage are the sole indication of a talented



Five-year-olds Cathie Blackman, left, and Kishma Crabbe in a reception class at Wandle Primary School in Wandsworth, South London

teacher — a far better pointer is the general atmosphere during lessons.

Parents should consider whether the teacher is clearly in charge, even if groups of students are working on their own initiative. That doesn't mean the teacher should be a Joyce Grenfell soundalike — quiet teachers are often the best — but effective primary school teaching depends on being able to keep firm control of the class. Satisfy yourself that this is taking place.

Talk to the children about their work. Ask them what they are doing, why they are doing it and what they ultimately hope to achieve. Children respond to challenges so the teacher should have set every child a target at the beginning of each exercise.

Alarm bells should start ringing if there are groups of bored children, half-hearing through work-sheets or projects.

Ask to see a random sample of pupils' work and pay careful attention to the teacher's comments. If they are clear

and helpful in tone then it is fair to assume that the children are being encouraged to do their best. A curt "Level 3, you can do better" means very little and suggests that the teacher may be casual or even uncaring.

Finally, on the subject of written work, note that it is very important that children take pride in the presentation of their work.

Look for storage facilities which keep paper and books unrumpled and safe. If carefully prepared drawings or writing assignments are dumped on the shelves of a cupboard, then it won't be long before it gets tatty and children lose interest.

Another consideration is the grouping of pupils. Having too few children in each year group makes it impossible for many schools to stream at the primary stage. But this does not mean that grouping by ability is impossible. It is now generally accepted that children should be working at levels appropriate to their ability — and preferably with children of similar ability to themselves. It's quite likely that the groups will change for different subjects: for art, drama and games, groups may deliberately be made up of mixed-ability pupils.

But do beware of teachers who have a broad policy of grouping the more disruptive children with the more able pupils.

Parents often say that they don't know what to ask teachers when they visit school.

That is understandable since education has created such a specialised language. However, a question about Literacy Hour would be pertinent.

Most primary schools believe that this innovation was thrust upon them too abruptly, allowing insufficient time to make it effective.

This is a fair comment but the good schools have now devised imaginative ways of making the idea work and they see it as a worthwhile

part of the school day. Therefore be wary of the teacher who rants about the utter impossibility of using the Literacy Hour beneficially.

Ask whether the school has a policy on bullying — it should. Under-achieving boys is another important issue and ask what the school does to encourage boys to read.

With daughters in mind, ask if girls are being encouraged in traditionally male-dominated subjects such as information technology. There are differing views on these subjects but the important point is that the teacher you are questioning should be able

to explain the school's stance.

A final piece of advice is to take a step back and imagine your child attending the school in question. Would he or she be stimulated by the teachers and pupils? Are the other children too boisterous?

Would the regime be too oppressive or too casual? Would there be sufficient emphasis on arts subjects? Is sport taken seriously? Will there be enough input from information technology experts?

Parents know their children best. Only they will be able to calculate the answers to these questions. It is up to them to judge as they see fit.

Why the Bacc is better than A levels

Ever since A levels were declared the "gold standard" of British education, ministers have tampered with them at their peril. No government wants to be accused of dumbing down, and Labour is particularly sensitive to the charge.

Baroness Blackstone is due to outline the latest proposals to broaden the sixth-form curriculum next month, and already the flak is flying. Winchester College was said this week to be considering switching to the International Baccalaureate (IB) if the move to modular courses went too far.

David Blunkett has guaranteed that a traditionally examined course will be maintained in every A-level subject. But schools such as Winchester

wonder how long that line will be held if the popularity of modular courses continues to grow. The college suspects that the modular route with retakes if things go wrong, will soon become the norm.

Yet it is far from certain that modular courses will prove an advantage in arts subjects. In English and history, for example, a student's grasp of the subject and an ability to marshal arguments is invariably stronger at the end of the course than at the time when the first modules would be examined. Similarly, in foreign languages, fluency takes time.

Doubters will take some

time to get used to the new modular system. But the gap with A levels will close to some extent when the new system arrives, and schools looking for a challenge in the sixth form may think again.

At present, head teachers and governors worry that parents would be nervous of anything without the A-level stamp of authority.

But universities are warming to the IB in recognition of the high standards expected across a broad range of subjects.

The addition of a school such as Winchester to the IB fold is just what the qualification needs to take off in Britain.

THE TIMES

Shakespeare's problem

The film about literature's greatest playwright will influence and mislead those studying his work, says Susan Elkin

As students they are fascinated by Gwyneth Paltrow, have heard about the romantic sex and cherish a naive notion that it will boost their Shakespeare revision.

Indeed, the plot of the movie *Shakespeare in Love* is based on literary allusions: I loved the scene when Will marched into a tavern and demanded "Give me to drink mandragora" after his own Cleopatra. Then there is the sending-up of Zeffirelli's excesses in the ballroom scene of his 1968 film *Romeo and Juliet*. And Tom Stoppard's agility in weaving in dialogue from his *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet* and *Guiding Stars Are Dead*.

But what will this slick nonsense do to students' largely literalist, and usually narrowly focused, perceptions? Will Stoppard's version of Shakespeare hit GCSE papers this summer? Or will students of 16 distinguish between the literary romp and what we know of Shakespeare's life and the writing of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night* (which is very little)?

Will the chronology mislead them? Of course, Shakespeare did not write *Twelfth Night* immediately after *Romeo and Juliet*, or reinvent his Juliet as Viola, as the film suggests. Most scholars agree that *Romeo and Juliet* (written by a mature man of 30, over halfway through his life, not by a mooting 22-year-old) and *Twelfth Night* were at least five years apart, with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Henry IV* parts I and II, among others, coming in between.

Teachers of English must drum into their students that one goes to Shakespeare for poetry, plot, action, characterisation, laughter and tears — but not for a factual account of English or Roman history, which, like many a playwright since, he distorts for his own dramatic purposes. The same applies to *Shakespeare in Love*, although teenagers might usefully grasp the point that women were precluded from acting on the Elizabethan stage.

Will students emerge from the cinema with the mistaken idea that Queen Elizabeth actually frequented London's filthy and potentially plague-ridden theatres with the masses? Or that 16th-century



As you like it: Gwyneth Paltrow and Joseph Fiennes in *Shakespeare in Love*

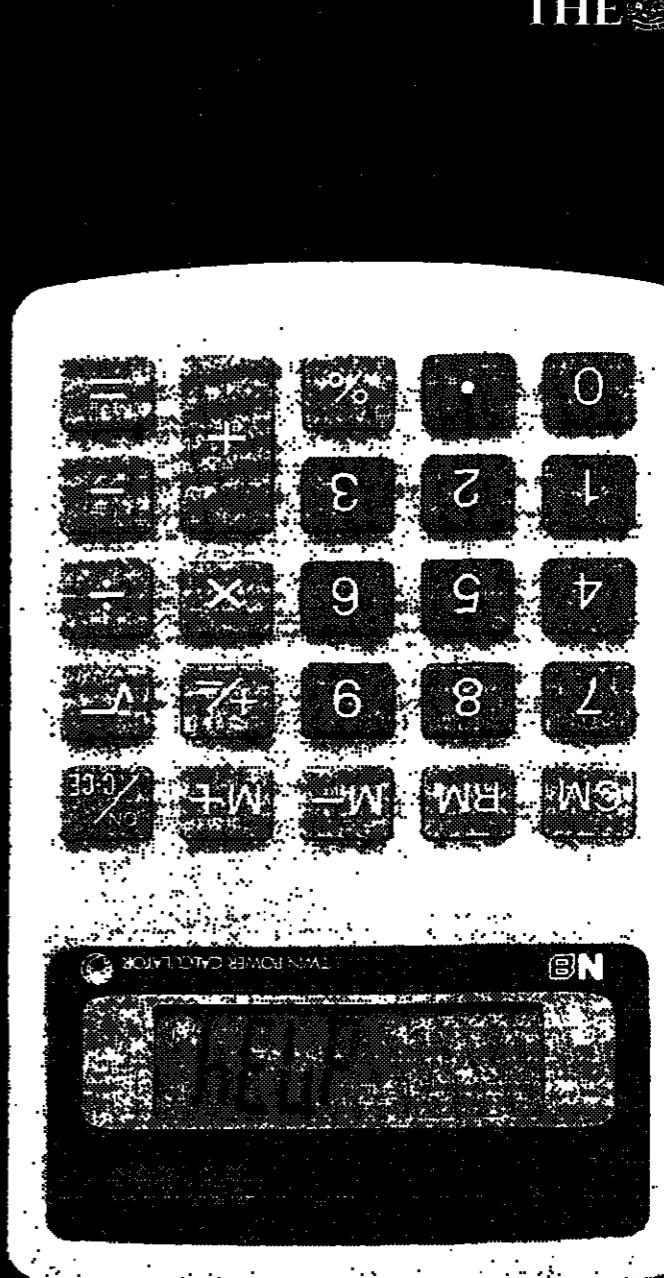
audiences were quietly attentive to the play? Or that a young gentlewoman who have been unsupervised enough to conduct an affair of the heart (and body) as Viola does in the film?

The trouble is that young audiences are inclined to believe unquestioningly what they are shown. Visual images are so much more powerful than anything said by a teacher or read in a book. From an Eng Lit point of view, *Shakespeare in Love* should probably come with a strong health warning. One way round this prob-

lem, since pupils will be influenced by it anyway, would be for English and Media Studies classes to confront the film head-on by studying it closely, unpicking the humour, the cross-references, the anachronisms and its contemporary relevance.

A GCSE student who had been led to an understanding of how and why such a film succeeds so well as popular entertainment today would be on the way to an educated frame of mind.

• Susan Elkin is a teacher of secondary English.



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CHANGING TIMES

Contributory negligence sum

Platform Home Loans Ltd v Oyston Shipways Ltd and Others Before Lord Lloyd of Berwick, Lord Cooke of Thorndon, Lord Hope of Craighead, Lord Hobhouse of Woodborough and Lord Millett [Speeches February 18]

Where a mortgage lender which sued surveyors for negligently overvaluing property accepted as security for a mortgage loan was found to be liable for a percentage of the loss arising from the application of section 10 of the Law Reform (Contributory Negligence) Act 1945, the percentage reduction for contributory negligence should be applied to the lender's basic loss as calculated before making any further deduction from the damages recoverable pursuant to the principle laid down in *Banque Bruxelles Lambert SA v Eagle Star Insurance Co Ltd* [1997] AC 191.

The House of Lords so held (Lord Cooke dissenting) in allowing an appeal by the plaintiff, Platform Home Loans Ltd, from a decision of the Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Morris, Lord Justice Thorpe and Lord Justice Potter) (The Times January 15, 1998) [1998] Ch 466 allowing an appeal by the first defendant, Oyston Shipways Ltd, trading as Shipways, a firm of surveyors, the second defendant, Bernard Thorpe (a former firm), and the third and fourth defendants, David Browning Allen and Stephen John Kitchen, from a decision of Mr Justice Jacob in the plaintiff's action for damages in negligence against the defendants.

Section 1 of the 1945 Act provides:

"Where any person suffers damage as the result partly of his own fault and partly of the fault of any other person or persons, a claim in respect of that damage shall not be defeated by reason of the fault of the person suffering the damage, but the damages recoverable in respect thereof shall be reduced to such an extent as the court thinks just and equitable having regard to the claimant's share in the responsibility for the damage."

Mr Nicholas Parsons, QC and Mr Andrew P. D. Walker for the plaintiff; Mr Simon Berry, QC and Mr Timothy Harry for the first and the second, third and fourth defendants.

Lord HOBHOUSE said that the question raised by the appeal concerned the application of section 10 of the 1945 Act to cases of professional negligence in the context of the principles laid down by the House of Lords in *Banque Bruxelles Lambert SA v Eagle Star Insurance Co Ltd* and *Nykredit Mortgage Bank plc v Edward Erdman Group Ltd* [No 2] [1997] 1 VLR 1627. The first step was to es-

tablish what was the basic loss of the lender. The second step was to see whether the basic loss exceeded the amount of the overvaluation and if it did, the lender's right of recovery from the value was limited to the extent of the overvaluation.

The issue was whether the reduction in the plaintiff's damages on account of their contributory negligence should have been applied to the plaintiff's basic loss or to their loss as limited by the application of the *Banque Bruxelles* principle: the second step above.

It would be appreciated that in all cases where the *Banque Bruxelles* principle was applicable because the plaintiff's basic loss exceeded the amount of the defendants' overvaluation the point was not academic and might have substantial financial consequences.

In the instant case, the judge found that there was a 20 per cent contributory negligence but held that it did not affect the outcome of the *Banque Bruxelles* calculation.

The Court of Appeal held that the *Banque Bruxelles* calculation had to be done first and the plaintiff's recoverable damages then be reduced by a further 20 per cent.

The figure of £611,749 was found to represent the plaintiff's basic loss through having entered into the transaction. The overvaluation of the property by the defendant was found to be £500,000.

Applying the *Banque Bruxelles* principle the plaintiff's recoverable damages fell to be reduced to £500,000.

The basic loss less 20 per cent was £489,398, that is, less than £500,000. That was the figure which the judge awarded. But £500,000 less 20 per cent was £400,000. The Court of Appeal held that the plaintiff's damages should be reduced pursuant to the 1945 Act to £400,000.

The *Banque Bruxelles* principle was not derived from any application of mathematics. The loss suffered by a lender in the event of a market fall might not be directly proportionate or equivalent to the original overvaluation.

The principle was essentially a legal rule which was applied in a robust way without the need for fine tuning or a detailed investigation of causation.

The other feature of the *Banque Bruxelles* litigation to which attention should be drawn was the fact that the question of contributory negligence was raised by the facts of the case involved but was not thought to give rise to any special problem or to the legal issues which had been debated in the instant case.

The totality of the plaintiff's loss in the instant case was partly caused by the defendants' fault and therefore the case came within the scope of section 10 of the 1945 Act. It was then necessary to consider

whether the third part of the statutory provision: which required the court to form a view as to what it thought was just and equitable having regard to the plaintiff's share in the responsibility for the damage and to reduce the plaintiff's recoverable damages accordingly.

It was at that point that the court had to ask itself whether, and if so to what extent, a further reduction in the plaintiff's basic loss was to be made beyond that already required by the application of the *Banque Bruxelles* principle.

It was just and equitable that plaintiff's who had suffered damage in the sum of £12,000 partly as a result of the defendant's fault and partly as the result of their own should have their recoverable damages reduced below the sum of £500,000.

The answer, in accordance with the finding of contributory negligence, was that there should be a further reduction in the plaintiff's recoverable damages.

If the overvaluation had been of the order of £615,000 the *Banque Bruxelles* principle would have been easy of application in all save exceptional cases, so also would the right answer to the application of section 10 be arrived at by applying the traditional percentage reduction to the lender's basic loss reduction to the plaintiff's basic loss.

His Lordship stressed that these were not rules of thumb. They did not aspire to mathematical precision nor was it desirable that any attempt be made in the ordinary run of cases to make them mathematically precise since the evidence would not necessarily be sufficient to justify such precision.

The task of the court was to make a just and equitable assessment.

Lord Millett delivered a concurring speech. Lord Lloyd and Lord Hope agreed and Lord Cooke delivered a dissenting speech.

Solicitors: Rosling King, Williams Davies Melzer and Dibb Cuproni Aspin, Birmingham.

Expert evidence

Regina v Fitzpatrick (Gerald)

Although it was important that a judge should make clear to a jury that they were not bound by an expert witness's opinion, it did not follow that that principle should be elevated into an inflexible requirement.

The Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Schlesinger, Mr Justice Hughes and Judge Stephens, QC) so held on February 11 in dismissing an appeal by Gerald Fitzpatrick against his conviction in February 1997 at Canterbury Crown Court (Mr Recorder Tillett, QC) and a conviction for an offence of being knowingly concerned in the fraudulent

evasion of the prohibition or restriction on the importation of a Class B drug, cannabis, for which he was sentenced to six years imprisonment.

MRI JUSTICE HUGHES, giving the judgment of the court, said that attention had been drawn to observations as to the nature of expert evidence in *R v Stockwell* [1993] 97 Cr App R 260, 261.

Their Lordships agreed that it was important so to direct the jury but it did not need to be in any particular way and it was not automatically a good ground of appeal if that particular form of words was not slavishly followed.

The totality of the plaintiff's loss in the instant case was partly caused by the defendants' fault and therefore the case came within the scope of section 10 of the 1945 Act.

It was then necessary to consider

whether the plaintiff's recoverable damages should be reduced to £400,000 on account of contributory negligence which was already fully taken into account.

The answer, in accordance with the finding of contributory negligence, was that there should be a further reduction in the plaintiff's recoverable damages.

If the overvaluation had been of the order of £615,000 the *Banque Bruxelles* principle would have been easy of application in all save exceptional cases, so also would the right answer to the application of section 10 be arrived at by applying the traditional percentage reduction to the lender's basic loss reduction to the plaintiff's basic loss.

His Lordship stressed that these were not rules of thumb. They did not aspire to mathematical precision nor was it desirable that any attempt be made in the ordinary run of cases to make them mathematically precise since the evidence would not necessarily be sufficient to justify such precision.

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Generale Bank Nederland NV (formerly Credit Lyonnais Bank Nederland NV) v Export Credits Guarantee Department

Before Lord Styan of Hadley, Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, Lord Steyn, Lord Clyde and Lord Millett [Speeches February 18]

An employer was not vicariously liable where an employee had done acts in the course of his employment which did not in themselves amount to a tort and only then done to assist or promote acts by another person which had been done by the employee, would have been outside the course of his employment. Before there could be vicarious liability, all the features of the wrong which were necessary to make the employee liable had to have occurred in the course of his employment.

There was not a separate tort of procuring another to commit a tort such as would make the employer conduct itself an actionable tort for which the employer would be liable.

The House of Lords so held in dismissing an appeal by Generale Bank Nederland NV, formerly Credit Lyonnais Bank Nederland NV, from the Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Stearn-Smith, Lord Justice Hobhouse and Lord Justice Thorpe) (The Times August 4, 1997) [1998] 1 Lloyd's Rep 191, upholding Mr Justice Longmore's decision in [1995] 1 Lloyd's Rep 200 of the bank's claim against the Export Credits Guarantee Department for damages in tort for losses due to the fraud of a Roland Chong, in which an employee of the department, Mr Pilla, was involved.

Mr Chong, aware that banks would purchase bills of exchange drawn by an exporter on foreign buyers against a guarantee from the department that the foreign buyer would pay for the goods in due course according to the contract of sale, sold the bank bills of exchange with forged buyer acceptances in relation to fictitious export contracts, supported by guarantees issued by the department which the employee had authorised.

Although the employee had knowledge of the scheme to defraud the bank, his issue of the guarantees was not in itself unlawful and it would not have been within his employment to do the acts by which the bank was deceived.

Mr Chong having disappeared, and the employee having died, the bank had sued the department in contract, claiming that the guarantees secured payment of the bills bought by the bank, and in tort, claiming that the department was vicariously liable for the acts of the employee in underwriting the guarantees.

The conduct for which the serv-

ant was responsible had to constitute an actionable tort and to make the employer responsible for that tort the conduct necessary to establish the employee's liability had to have occurred within the course of the employment. If the tort was committed jointly, then it was conduct which was within the course of the employment sufficient to constitute the tort, irrespective of which tortfeasor performed the acts, as both tortfeasors were responsible for the tortious conduct as a whole in the course of tort it was not necessary to distinguish between the actions of different tortfeasors.

For vicarious liability what was critical, as long as one of the joint tortfeasors was an employee, was that the combined conduct of both tortfeasors was sufficient to constitute a tort in the course of the employment.

The statement was an insecure foundation for what was being sought here the establishment of a new stand alone tort committed by Mr Pilla in the course of his employment.

Mr Pilla had relied on a short passage from a judgment of Mr Justice Diplock in *Smith v Powell* (The Times April 29, 1959): "There was no separate tort of procuring a third person to commit a tort, but the procuring was a joint tortfeasor with the person who actually committed it."

He had also relied, *inter alia*, on *CBS Songs Ltd v Amstrad Consumer Electronics plc* (1988) AC 1013, 1039 where Lord Templeman strongly suggested that there was little scope for the creation of such a tort.

The tort in which Mr Sumption sought to rely was unsupported by authority. The authority which did exist strongly suggested that there was no such tort.

The only purpose for establishing its existence was to make the department vicariously liable for Mr Pilla's conduct. That was not a justification for the recognition of such a tort.

Mr Sumption's second argument was that where an employee assisted in the violation by another of an individual's rights pursuant to a common design to defraud, the employer incurred liability as a result of his conduct.

He argued, in particular, that there was no justification for treating the torts of procuring breaches of contract or statutory duty as self-contained islands of law as opposed to illustrations of a more general principle.

The first was that where an employee assisted in the violation by at least a clarification of the law, but he submitted that it was based on well established principles.

He argued, in particular, that there was no justification for treating the torts of procuring breaches of contract or statutory duty as self-contained islands of law as opposed to illustrations of a more general principle.

His Lordship said that the principle on which vicarious liability depended was that the wrong of the servant or agent for which the master or principal was liable was one committed, in the case of a servant, in the course of his employment and, in the case of an agent, in the course of his authority.

It was accepted by Mr Sumption that that involved a development or at least a clarification of the law, but he submitted that it was based on well established principles.

He argued, in particular, that there was no justification for treating the torts of procuring breaches of contract or statutory duty as self-contained islands of law as opposed to illustrations of a more general principle.

The second was that the procurement of the violation of a right is a cause of action in all instances where the violation is an actionable wrong.

That statement was capable of being treated as saying no more than that if you procure the commission of an actionable wrong by another then you were liable for another.

The conduct for which the serv-

ant was responsible had to constitute an actionable tort and to make the employer responsible for that tort the conduct necessary to establish the employee's liability had to have occurred within the course of the employment. If the tort was committed jointly, then it was conduct which was within the course of the employment sufficient to constitute the tort, irrespective of which tortfeasor performed the acts, as both tortfeasors were responsible for the tortious conduct as a whole in the course of tort it was not necessary to distinguish between the actions of different tortfeasors.

That would not assist because as already stated, the department could not be vicariously liable for a wrong which was not performed in the course of Mr Pilla's employment.

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Mr Sumption's second argument was that before the bank could be liable, the employee had to have been outside the course of his employment and say that the department was vicariously liable.

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That statement was capable of being treated as saying no more than that if you procure the commission of an actionable wrong by another then you were liable for another.

The conduct for which the serv-

Limit to vicarious liability

The claim in contract was no longer pursued.

Mr Jonathan Sumption, QC and Mr Richard Stade for the bank; Mr Gordon Pollock, QC, Mr Jonathan Hirst, QC and Mr Graham Dunring for the department.

MR WOOLF said that the bank would have had no difficulty in succeeding in an action against Mr Chong or Mr Pilla.

There was no dispute that they would have been liable jointly and severally to the bank for deceit.

The problem of the bank was establishing the vicarious liability of the department which had been done by the employee, would have been outside the course of his employment.

Before there could be vicarious liability, all the features of the wrong which were necessary to make the employee liable had to have occurred in the course of his employment.

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four-day passes with centre transfers to the 1999 or 2000 British Grand Prix for individual race winners. Choose your fantasy team with care. You can enter by post or phone. Postal entries must be received by first post on Wednesday, March 3 to qualify for the Australian Grand Prix. Pick your drivers and constructors from the groups specified below. Starting with the Brazilian Grand Prix, six races carry up to 600 bonus points for correctly predicting any of the first three drivers to finish. Bad driving and failing to finish will incur penalties. Full details of how you can make transfers to strengthen your team will appear after the Australian Grand Prix.

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THE SCORING SYSTEM

DRIVERS For each lap completed: 1 point. **Finishing position:** 1st 60 points; 2nd 50; 3rd 40; 4th 30; 5th 29; 6th 28; 7th 27; 8th 26; 9th 25; 10th 24; 11th 23; 12th 22; 13th 21; 14th 20; 15th 19; 16th 18; 17th 17; 18th 16; 19th 15; 20th 14. **Qualifying position:** Pole 30 points; 2nd 25; 3rd 24; 4th 23; 5th 22; 6th 21; 7th 20; 8th 19; 9th 18; 10th 17; 11th 16; 12th 15; 13th 14; 14th 13; 15th 12; 16th 11; 17th 10; 18th 9; 19th 8; 20th 7. **Improvement from starting grid to finishing position:** 3 points per place improved. **Fastest lap:** 10 points. **Penalty points:** Any incident resulting in a driver being made to start from the back of the grid or pit lane -10 points. Any incident resulting in elimination during a race -10 points. Not starting after qualifying for a race -10 points. Speeding in pit lane -5 points. Black flag -20 points.

CONSTRUCTORS **Finishing position (first car only):** 1st 30 points; 2nd 25; 3rd 24; 4th 23; 5th 22; 6th 21; 7th 20; 8th 19; 9th 18; 10th 17; 11th 16; 12th 15; 13th 14; 14th 13; 15th 12; 16th 11; 17th 10; 18th 9; 19th 8; 20th 7. **Penalty points:** Any incident resulting in a car being made to start from the back of the grid or pit lane -10 points. Any incident resulting in elimination during a race -10 points. Not starting after qualifying for a race -10 points. Speeding in pit lane -5 points.

BONUS POINTS apply to six grands prix during the 1999 Formula One championship, the first of which is the Brazilian Grand Prix. **Correctly predicting winning driver:** 100 points; second place: 200 points; third place: 300 points

MAKE THREE SELECTIONS FROM EACH OF THE FOUR GROUPS BELOW



Damon Hill

David Coulthard

Mika Häkkinen

Michael Schumacher

Eddie Irvine

DRIVERS

GROUP A

01 Mika Häkkinen 07 Eddie Irvine 12 Ralf Schumacher 18 Jarno Trulli
02 Michael Schumacher 08 Oliver Panis 13 Heinz-Harald Frentzen 19 Rubens Barrichello
03 Damon Hill 09 Giancarlo Fisichella 14 Alexander Wurz 20 Pedro Diniz
04 David Coulthard 10 Jean Alesi 15 Mika Salo 21 Pedro de la Rosa
05 Alessandro Zanardi 11 Johnny Herbert 16 Ricardo Zonta 22 Norberto Fontana*
06 Jacques Villeneuve 17 Marc Gene 23 Subject to confirmation 24 Sauber

GROUP B

19 Jarno Trulli 20 Pedro Diniz 21 Pedro de la Rosa 22 Norberto Fontana*
23 McLaren 24 Ferrari 25 Williams 26 Jordan
25 Rubens Barrichello 26 Jordan 27 Benetton 28 Sauber
26 Sauber

CONSTRUCTORS

29 Arrows 30 BAR 31 Stewart 32 Prost
30 BAR 32 Prost 33 Minardi

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Follow the instructions on the line and tap in your 12 two-digit selections in turn. The order in which you register your first three drivers will be your predictions for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd finishing places for the grands prix where bonus points apply. You will then be asked to give your Fantasy Formula One team name (maximum 16 characters), together with your own name, address, postcode and daytime telephone number. Readers in the UK and Republic of Ireland should enclose a sterling cheque for £3 or provide their credit-card details. The entry fee for readers resident outside the UK or Republic of Ireland is £15. Post the form to: The Times NatWest Fantasy Formula One, Abacus House, Dudley Street, Luton LU1 1ZZ. You will receive a 10-digit PIN as confirmation of your entry. You can enter a team at any time until noon on Thursday, March 4, 1999 to qualify for the start of the Australian Grand Prix.

TO ENTER BY POST

Complete the form, right, with your 12 two-digit selections. The order in which you register your first three drivers will be your predictions for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd finishing places for the grands prix where bonus points apply. The entry fee for readers resident outside the UK or Republic of Ireland is £15. Post the form to: The Times NatWest Fantasy Formula One, Abacus House, Dudley Street, Luton LU1 1ZZ. Your entry must be received by first post on Wednesday, March 3, 1999 to qualify for the Australian Grand Prix.

Give your Fantasy Formula One team name (maximum 16 characters), together with your own name, address, postcode and daytime telephone number. Readers in the UK and Republic of Ireland should enclose a sterling cheque for £3 or provide their credit-card details. The entry fee for readers resident outside the UK or Republic of Ireland is £15. Post the form to: The Times NatWest Fantasy Formula One, Abacus House, Dudley Street, Luton LU1 1ZZ. You will receive a 10-digit PIN as confirmation of your entry. For your Fantasy Formula One team to start scoring points at the Australian GP, which takes place in Melbourne on Sunday, March 7, postal entries must be received by first post on Wednesday, March 3, 1999. Entries received after this date will only score points for any remaining grands prix.

THE TIMES NATWEST FANTASY FORMULA ONE ENTRY FORM

Complete this form with your credit-card details, or enclose a sterling cheque for £3 payable to Fantasy Formula One. For readers resident outside the UK or ROI the fee is £15. Post it to: The Times NatWest Fantasy Formula One, Abacus House, Dudley Street, Luton LU1 1ZZ. Your entry must be received by first post on Wednesday, March 3, 1999 to qualify for the Australian Grand Prix.

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Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms
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Address _____

Postcode _____ Day tel _____

Credit Card Payment Card number: _____

Expiry date: _____ / _____ / _____ MasterCard _____ Visa _____

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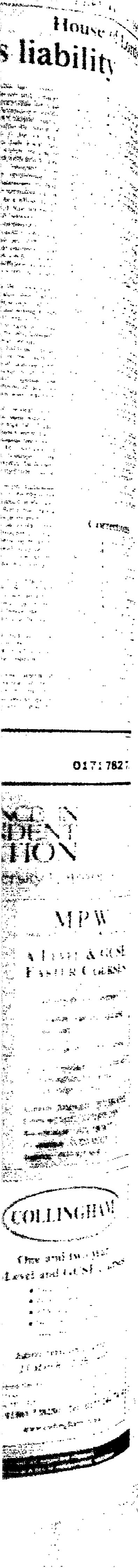
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Vaughan ensures victory for England A

BY THRASY PETROPOULOS AND JOHN STERN

THE England A team held their nerve to beat Zimbabwe A by four wickets in the second limited-overs match in Harare yesterday and so ensured victory in the three-match series. The win lacked the drama of Bulawayo, where England won by a single wicket in the last over, but a revised target of 151 in 47 overs was a challenging one nonetheless and, but for a measured innings of 41 not out from Michael Vaughan, the captain, and a plucky contribution from Chris Read, it might have been Zimbabwe A.

Vikram Solanki appeared to be hurrying England to victory, but, having reached 29 from 25 balls, he drove loosely at Gary Brent and was bowled. When Paul Franks followed shortly afterwards, 40 runs were still needed with four wickets standing.

Andy Blignaut, whose first eight overs had brought him two wickets for 32 runs, was then recalled, but his next two cost him 24.

The bowlers then put in a disciplined performance to restrict Zimbabwe to 154 with Franks, a latecomer to the tour as replacement for Paul Hutchison, taking four for 34. More impressive, though, was Steve Harmison, who worked up a fine pace and conceded only 13 runs off the bat in ten overs.

Ian Bell, who was close to selection for the Warwickshire first XI towards the end of last summer, made 115 of the England Under-19 team's 272 for seven on the opening day of the third four-day international against New Zealand Under-19 in Alexandra.

Despite a slow out-field, Bell needed only 142 balls for his century. He showed remarkable concentration in an innings flanked only by the timing and manner of his dismissal. With the new ball only one over away, he came down the pitch to Bruce Martin, the left-arm spinner, and was stumped for 115.

Marc Symington held England together towards the close and was unbeaten 39 after almost three hours.

Scoreboards, page 49

CRICKET: SRINATH BRINGS ABOUT DRAMATIC COLLAPSE TO KEEP INDIA IN CONTENTION

Superb Saeed stands alone

FROM RICHARD HOBSON IN CALCUTTA

CALCUTTA (third day of five): India, with all second-innings wickets in hand, need 225 runs to beat Pakistan

SAEED ANWAR set himself high goals on his arrival in India by boasting that his primary target for the month ahead was to score a triple-century. While not reaching that landmark yesterday, he might well have produced the single individual performance that will swing the first game of the Asian Test Championship in Pakistan's favour.

From inauspicious beginnings, when his feet seemed to be cast in lead, Saeed steadied himself, expanded his range and finally reached a point where he was the complete master of the India attack. Even Jagavaj Srinath, who returned the best figures of his Test career – eight for 86 – was powerless to contain the left-hander at the height of his destructive powers.

Had the lower order offered better support then Saeed would surely have recorded a maiden double hundred and Pakistan put the game well beyond the reach of opponents, who, through lack of dynamic leadership, allowed things to drift out of control in the period just before and after tea. Even as it is, the target of 279 will prove

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN: First Innings 185 (Mon Khan 70, J Srinath 5 for 46).

Second Innings Saeed Anwar not out..... 188

Waqar Youhana 100 not out..... 9

Saeed Anwar & Mongia 21

Iqbal Ahmed c Mongia b Saeed..... 11

Yousuf Youhana c Dravid b Saeed..... 56

Shahid Afridi c Laxman b Saeed..... 0

Salim Malik lbw b Saeed..... 9

Wasim Akram c Mongia b Saeed..... 0

Azhar Mahmood lbw b Saeed..... 0

Wasim Akram c Mongia b Saeed..... 1

Shoaib Akhtar b Saeed..... 1

Extras (0, 3, w, nb 4)..... 12

Total..... 316

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-26, 2-94, 3-148, 4-222, 5-261, 6-289, 7-301, 8-302, 9-304.

BOWLING: Strength 27.6-65-6; Prasad 20-5-1; Kumar 27-4-21-1; Singh 16-1-5-1; Laxman 24-0-10; Ramesh 1-0-5-0; Tendulkar 2-0-10-0.

INDIA: First Innings 223 (S Ramesh 79; Shoaib Akhtar 47).

Second Innings Saeed Anwar not out..... 4

VVS Laxman not out..... 0

Total (no wkt)..... 4

BOWLING: Shoaib Akhtar 0.5-0-4-0

Umpires: S A Bucknor (West Indies) and D L Orchard (South Africa).



Saeed, the third Pakistan opener to carry his bat in Test cricket, swings Singh for six

the third umpire adjudicated correctly, this kind of behaviour breeds mistrust between teams who do not have a history of friendship, however successful the last four weeks. As a native Bengali, too, Ganguly should know that the crowd here is, potentially, perhaps the most volatile in the world.

An ineffectual push against Srinath soon accounted for Salim, in any case, and Moin

offered a thin nick to Mongia as he tried to hook a rare, but effective Prasad bouncer. Azhar Mahmood completed a pair when he played down the wrong line before Wasim Akram, visibly tense, followed a wide ball from Srinath.

Srinath's yorker that accounted for Shoaib Akhtar to end the innings was a worthy conclusion to a vibrant spell of six for 30 in 9.3 overs. Saeed thus became the third

Pakistan batsman after Nazar Mohammad and Mudassar Nazar, father and son, to carry his bat through an innings, but there was no evidence of celebration back at the team hotel last night. That may follow today.

LINKS
www.uk.cricket.org/

THE TIMES FRIDAY FEBRUARY 19 1999

Hickman lays foundation for more glory

Craig Lord on a swimmer training his thoughts on staying at the top

There is no fat on James Hickman, no luxuriance about him as he sits relaxed but tight in body and mind high up in the seas overlooking the swimming pool, like some big cat in the dry season, surveying a distant African plain for the arrival of game.

The winter World Cup season is drawing to a close and Hickman is still tethered by the constraints of both the most intensive six-week training period of his career and a lack of good sport in his past few races before he defends his world short-course title in Hong Kong in April.

His easy winning ways in Glasgow last weekend and Malmö in midweek, the first two of five concluding European rounds of the World Cup, indicate a season of plenty ahead.

This weekend in Paris, he will test himself one last time before Hong Kong, but he knows that his efforts will pale by comparison to his achievements in the French capital last year, when he set the world record of 1min 51.70sec when fully rested.

Unrest, he expects to be slower today. Yet Hickman is happy. "I've never had such an intense period of training," he said. "I came through it without getting over-tired, without getting ill. I came down off the heavy work just at the right time. We went right to the limits."

The "we" includes Terry Denison, the coach at Leeds, who was mentor to Adrian Moorhouse, the 1988 Olympic champion, and to whom Hickman turned just over a year ago. That move goes some way to explaining the swimmer's altered ego. After winning Commonwealth and European short-course titles last year, Hickman was

how fine the line can be."

Moorhouse won by 0.01sec

in 51.70sec when fully rested.

Hickman will soon start his rest period. He all but salivates at the prospect: "I love it. I can feel myself getting faster and I start to get excited about the race. There's no feeling like it."

For a fleeting moment, he is the animal ready to give chase. Then he remembers patience, relaxes and settles back into sit-tight mode, the keeper of one thought: "I know I'm the best fly swimmer in the world and I aim to prove it."

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SAFETY IS A PRIORITY AT ALL TIMES

Cult of the coach creates more problems for Henry

This weekend, Graham Henry, the Wales coach, will find himself facing the kind of scrutiny that he has not experienced before. After his team's defeat at Murrayfield, the second failure in three matches, he would appear to be under the microscope. This is a statistic that some people are beginning to concentrate on.

Yet, at the time, the loss against South Africa in November was not thought of as a reversal at all. In some minds, a kind of victory had been achieved. Indeed, in Wales, something approaching a celebration took place. There was a noticeable lightness, if not exactly a spring, in a Welshman's step as the new dawn, much talked about, seemed to be breaking at last.

It was relative. The grief that was supposed to occur in the wake of the heavy score that had been anticipated, and which might

have proved embarrassing, was replaced by a strong dose of relief that nothing of the sort happened. If it was not a win for Wales, the prevailing verdict was that the team would, at least, have deserved it. This was enough to be

In more innocent times, when sport did not matter quite so much and we were more at ease with such matters, they used to call this kind of thing a moral victory. This was a pleasant palliative, one that allowed people to feel that a bad result was not so bad after all. In the harsher light of the final few months of the 20th century, we know that there is no such thing as sport.

In another respect, too, there is a sharper, indeed a more cruel, focus and this applies to the way in which a national coach is perceived. He seems to have to ride the extreme highs and lows of his sport, with hardly anything in be-

tween. Everything is made to rest on his shoulders, not merely the fate of his team's fortunes, but that of a whole nation.

The coach in rugby, or the manager in football, is where the buck stops and yet his position and the way in which he carries the final crust is the most vulnerably exposed. He has to depend so much on others for his own success and to do so, unlike other occupations, in the intense glare of publicity that is so open to fluctuating opinion.

There is a jolly merry-go-round in football where managers change places at every whim and which, given recent developments — Richard Hill of Gloucester, being the latest casualty — rugby is in danger of resembling.

Henry is not in this position, not by any means, but if he has been portrayed as the great redeemer, a figure in whom everyone has faith, a few doubting Thomases have emerged on the touch-

line after the last match. For the most part, Wales had the better of the contest against Scotland and they could have won, but, once more, they did not bag the prize. However, unlike the defeat against South Africa, not much comfort could be found in the result at Murrayfield. As a result, questions arise as to what extent should Henry, who, as coach, can only determine the strategy, be the centre of attraction? Or should the players, who failed tactically to win a game that was patiently within their grasp, be held more to account?

Carwyn James used to regret the fact that rugby union in this country did not promote, as he would say, "the cult of the coach". This was, of course, in the Sixties and Seventies, when the rugby authorities would not allow the mere mention of the word to pass their lips, such was the distaste towards the idea that a team should have a man at the helm to teach and guide players.

Scotland had what they called "advisers" to the national team, the British Isles persisted in hav-

ing an assistant manager. Once this particular hurdle had been overcome, it took them some time for the coach to be appointed a member of the selection panel. In other words, he would be in overall charge of preparing a team, which, incongruously, he had not played a part in selecting. This was not so long ago.

Now times have changed. From the position of ready, a presence to be suffered, the coach is now king. But there should be some reservation. The cult of the coach may have gone too far. Rugby, in its need to generate a strongly-knit band of players, a feeling of closeness and common spirit, acknowledging the game's tactical ebb and flow and the variety of choices to be made from minute to minute, would do better to redress the balance and to promote the "cult" of

the captain. Traditionally, both New Zealand and South Africa have believed in the need of a strong character as captain and the continuity that this brings. The crucial 80 minutes of play belongs under his direct control and whatever messages are passed electronically these days between the coach's bench and the field of play, it is the captain who interprets that advice and translates it into action. The loss of Sean Fitzpatrick to the All Blacks is already measurable in their recent record-breaking series of defeats.

So it is time to take the pressure off Henry, who, after all, has been in his post for barely four months. The more responsibility is thrust upon his shoulders, the more it is taken away from the players. The sooner that the Wales team accepts more accountability for its actions, the sooner it will mature.

RUGBY UNION

Wilkinson's calm air impresses England players

BY DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

TWO of England's senior professionals gave Jonathan Wilkinson their seal of approval yesterday as the youngster prepared to start a Five Nations Championship match for the first time, against Scotland, at Twickenham tomorrow.

Lawrence Dallaglio, the captain, and Jeremy Guscott, the oldest member of the team, are delighted with the calm approach that Wilkinson, 19, has adopted. Guscott made his international debut ten years ago, at the age of 23. Tomorrow, he will partner Wilkinson in the centre against a Scotland midfield that includes Alan Tait, who played with Wilkinson at Newcastle last season and who was mildly critical of Guscott in an autobiography published last year. Guscott's sombre

sense of humour did not endear him to the Scot during the British Isles tour of South Africa, though it is unlikely to colour tomorrow's meeting.

"When you play these big matches, the adrenalin soars, the expectation overwhelms you," Guscott said. "All experienced players can do is try to keep you calm, but Jonny has that ability, even at a young age. Jonny has been talking more to us in training than we have to him. He's a real general and that's unusual in what has passed."

Indeed, there has been a certain twitchiness in training this week, which will keep England minds on the job in hand, devoid of any premature thoughts of triple crowns or grand slams. Dallaglio acknowledged that England's cause has been helped by their hard core of six Leicester forwards, even though he expects them to lift their game above the level of club performances.

"Having that core makes it more akin to the way things operate in other countries, where one province may supply several players," Dallaglio said. "The understanding is better and in the heller-skeller world of English rugby, where you can go from country to club cup match, then country, then Premiership match, it makes coming together as a national squad that much easier."

The first action between England and Scotland will be this evening, at A and under-21 level at Leeds and Orrell respectively, and Dallaglio warned that Scotland's success against Wales, only to struggle to establish himself as an automatic choice for Scotland. In 1997, he was injured and dropped and returned to favour only in the final two games of last year's championship.

Asked if he had been tempted to wrap his players in cotton wool to avoid further injuries in the build-up, Telfer gave a characteristic response.

"There was a temptation, but we managed to resist it," he said. "More like steel wool."

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Weir not suffered injuries during the Welsh match.

Tait has been used chiefly as a substitute in recent matches, but the selectors clearly hope he has a level of endurance befitting a player whose international career began in 1988.

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SNOOKER

Suffering Williams maintains healthy interest

By PHIL YATES

MARK WILLIAMS maintained hope of emulating Steve Davis and Stephen Hendry as only the third player to triumph in three consecutive world ranking events when he advanced to the quarter-finals of the Scottish Open at Aberdeen yesterday.

Williams, winner of the Irish Open in December and the Welsh Open last month, extended his unbeaten run in ranking tournaments to 14 matches with a 5-4 victory over Matthew Stevens, a team-mate when Wales won the Nations Cup five weeks ago.

"I don't know how I'm still here," Williams, who is suffering from a chest infection, said. "I suppose winning becomes a habit, but I thought a few times today that the sequence was going to end. That's had its chance."

Stevens, who was runner-up to John Higgins at the United Kingdom championship, recovered from being 6-4 adrift to steal the second frame on the black and also salvaged the third from a seemingly hopeless position.

Williams, 53-0 up, missed a routine black off its spot, then, after needing a snooker on the last red, Stevens cleared with 35 to again achieve an unlikely success on the black.

When Williams arrived at the mid-session interval trailing 3-1, he looked decidedly vulnerable. By winning three of the following four frames, Williams carried the gripping match its full distance, but Stevens, who trounced him 9-1 at the corresponding stage of the 1997 United Kingdom championship, found himself presented with a golden opportunity in the decider.

However, on 29 and with the balls spread invitingly, he unluckily snookered himself on the pink. A nervy exchange ensued before Williams produced a 41 clearance after trapping Stevens in a fiendish snooker with four reds remaining. He now meets Fergal O'Brien or Ken Doherty.

Paul Hunter, the second-round conqueror of Ronnie O'Sullivan, the holder, stayed off a spirited fightback from Jamie Burnett to edge through 5-4. There was a 5-4 win, too, for Graeme Dott, 21, from Glasgow, who was two frames down with three to play against John Parrott.

Peter Ebdon, who laboured to beat Jimmy White 5-3 late on Wednesday night, was a spent force against Stephen Lee and was whitewashed 5-0.

TENNIS: BRITON BREEZES THROUGH TO JOIN HENMAN IN QUARTER-FINALS

Untroubled Rusedski romps into last eight

FROM JULIAN MUSCAT
TENNIS CORRESPONDENT
IN ROTTERDAM

IT WAS as facile a victory as any posted by Greg Rusedski in his professional career. Edwin Kempes, a wild-card entrant from Holland, was overwhelmed by the Briton's service as he succumbed 6-1, 6-4 in the indoor tournament here yesterday.

Kempes, ranked No 174 in the world, barely offered Rusedski a meaningful practice session. This was the first time that he had faced an opponent of the calibre of the No 5 seed and it showed. He was hopelessly sucked into the slipstream of Rusedski's searing power.

Still, the exercise can only have bolstered Rusedski's confidence as he progressed to the quarter-finals, joining Tim Henman, who today meets either Fabrice Santoro or Karol Kucera. Rusedski dished up 12 aces, many of them at three-quarter speed. "I really didn't feel I could lose my serve today," he said. "It is nice to get a win like that."

Kempes, 22, had one previous victory on the ATP tour to his name, a first-round defeat of Jan Kroslik, a qualifier from Slovakia. Victory levelled Rusedski's seasonal record to 4-4 and marked the first time this year that he has won back-to-back matches. So bemused was Kempes that he could earn just seven points against service in the match.

Rusedski, ensconced in the bottom half of the draw, faces a tall order if he is to reach his first final of the year. He next faces the winner between Cedric Pioline and Richard Krajicek, the No 4 seed, who met late last night. Also lurking in the lower section is Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the No 2 seed, who overwhelmed Hicham Arazi 6-1, 6-2.

This carpet surface proved all too quick for Arazi, whose shot-making skills were negated by the force of the Russian's hitting. Arazi is easily demoralised and Kafelnikov, the arch technician, quickly had the Moroccan wishing that he was anywhere else but opposite the recently crowned Australian Open champion.

Safin, 19, has since reached the fourth round at the US Open before succumbing to Pete Sampras.

Safin, world-ranked No 39, has opened 1999 with a show of intent. Although the big-hitting teenager remains raw around the edges, his rate of progress has impressed. He held his nerve to dismiss Alex Corretja, the No 1 seed, in the first round and yesterday advanced to the quarter-finals after a four 7-6, 5-7, 6-3 victory over Dominik Hrbaty, of Slovakia.

There is a sense of inner turmoil whenever Safin takes to the court. He regularly raises his arms in frustration, often scolding himself for failing to maintain a brilliant standard.



Rusedski sends down another powerful service on his way to victory over Kempes yesterday

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He is thus unduly hard on himself. "I thought I was going to lose that match," Safin said. "In the second set, I was playing my best tennis and I was losing. It came as a shock to me."

Safin required six match points before felling Corretja. He needed three more against Hrbaty and that detail, he maintained, marked the difference between the Challenger circuit and the ATP tour. "It is a different mentality," Safin said. "Players fight for every ball on the tour. They play the important points much better. In Challengers, they sometimes lose matches in their heads. They can be very weak."

Safin plays Wayne Ferreira, of South Africa, today for a semi-final place after the latter accounted for Jérôme Golmard, of France, in an attractive match.

Ferreira edged through 5-7, 6-3, 7-6 to snap a six-match winning streak for Golmard and will be the first serve-and-volley opponent that Safin has faced in this tournament. "I can play on this surface against other baseliners because I feel comfortable against them," Safin said. "How I will cope against Ferreira, I just don't know."

LINKS
WEBSITE: www.stptour.com
TELEVISION: Eurosport, 2.00pm (live)

ATHLETICS

Britain waits on Wembley

BY DAVID POWELL
ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT

that Wembley will be ready unless the sale is completed next month. Yesterday, Bob Stoops, the chief executive of ENSDC, put pressure on the board of Wembley plc to complete the sale, which goes before shareholders next month.

The bid, which means no World Cup at Wembley, no world athlete championships and, after 2002, when the existing contract expires, no FA events. This is not an idle threat."

"Providing the application is in by early to mid-summer, the 2003 deadline should be met," Geoff Raw, Brent Council's Wembley project co-ordinator, said.

FIXTURES

FOOTBALL
Kicks off 2.30 unless stated
Nationwide League
First division
Sheffield Utd v Bradford (7.45)
Third division
Cardiff v Hartlepool

UNIBOND LEAGUE Premier division
Leigh v Padiham

FOOTBALL LEAGUE YOUTH
ANCE: North East Conference: Huddersfield v Grimsby 11.00; York v Halifax 12.00
League 1: Walsall v Accrington 19.30; Carlisle United v Shrewsbury 19.30

FAI HARP NATIONAL LEAGUE Premier division: St Patrick's Athletic v Dundalk (7.45); Shamrock v Bray (7.45);

LEAGUE Under-18: Nottingham Forest v Leeds (1.30); West Ham v Tottenham (1.30)

RUGBY UNION

A International matches

England v Scotland (at Leeds, 7.30) ...

Wales v Ireland (at Ebbw Vale, 7.0) ...

Under-21 International matches

England v Scotland (at Orrell, 7.30) ...

Wales v Ireland (at Caerphilly, 2.30) ...

CLUB MATCHES Oxford University v Cambridge (7.15); Worcester v Macclesfield (7.30)

OTHER SPORT

ICE HOCKEY: Selkirk Superleague

Manchester Storm v Bracknell Bees (7.0)

WORD-WATCHING
Answers from page 47
GRISAILLE

(c) Painting in several shades and intensities of grey or stone-colour. Painting en Grisaille is to be found on porcelain and also as trompe l'oeil wall painting imitating bas reliefs in stone. Grisaille was especially popular in the early 17th century.

(b) A fragrant gum yielding a resinoid and oil, obtained from Canarium and Proteum trees, common in the Philippines, Java and the West Indies. The gum may be powdered and used in pomander or as a fixative in sachets. Some is used in incense.

MANDELION

(b) A towel that is placed over a bishop's arm in order to protect the vestments when he is invested for the consecration of a church. Also a towel on the left shoulder of the sub-deacon for the bishop to dry his hands on after washing in the Great Entrance.

SHIFRA

(b) A Jewish journal launched in 1983 to provide a forum for women to discuss their experiences. It was named after a Jewish woman murdered by the Nazis in 1943. It has her name, and not that of her father or husband.

SOLUTION TO WINNING MOVE

I Rg7+ Rxg7 (1 Kh8 2 Qh6) 2 Qxb6 and White wins easily on material

TELEVISION CHOICE

Titchmarsh television

Gardeners' World

BBC2, 8.30pm

Alan Titchmarsh fans can now enjoy a full hour of him on Friday evenings, with *Ground Force* playing on BBC1 at 8pm and *Gardeners' World* coming up immediately afterwards on BBC2. But the frenetic makeovers a la *Ground Force* are not to all tastes and traditionalists may prefer to stick with the programme which was launched back in the 1960s by the legendary Percy Thrower and tonight begins its thirteenth series. The main ingredients of *Gardeners' World*, practical advice interspersed with garden visits, have been reassuringly retained, as has the resident team in which Titchmarsh is joined by Pippa Greenwood, Gay Search and Stephen Lacy. A feature of the new series will be a look at the garden of the future.

Country House

BBC2, 7.30pm

In its quiet understated way the series about Woburn Abbey continues to come up with the unexpected. Lady Tavistock, mistress of the estate, is being measured. Not for some ballgown, as you might think, but for her coffin. It is not that she is about to depart this world, just that she likes being prepared. In any case, the casket can be used to store her tapestry work. Lord Tavistock's reaction is that he has seen the best of the family done to it. Lady T has already planned her funeral, knowing how irritated she would be if the wrong hymn were sung. Whether the Tavistocks will still be at Woburn by then seems uncertain. They would like to pass it over to their son, Andrew, alias Lord Howland. Mumm insists that he should be married and have children first but he is approaching 36 and shows no sign of doing either.

Heligan — The Return

Channel 4, 8.30pm

A previous Channel 4 series charted the discovery and reconstruction of the Cornish garden which had been abandoned after the First World War and left to grow wild. Heligan may be a "lost" garden no longer but the work goes on and four new programmes update the story. The material may be less compelling than before, when we were able to witness the dramatic transformation of an



Dawn French and Joanna Scanlan star in *Murder Most Horrid* (BBC2, 9pm)

penetrable jungle. There is drama, however, even in such seemingly straightforward projects as the restoration of the summerhouse garden. High up on an exposed site, it is the oldest part of the Heligan garden and offers the only view to the sea. But the attempt to secure that view by cutting "windows" in the surrounding hedge incurs the displeasure of Dominic Cole, Heligan's historical adviser.

Murder Most Horrid

BBC2, 9.00pm

Dawn French returns to play a new selection of characters in the fourth series of black comedies with murder at their heart. Tonight's dark and enjoyable preposterous tale is planned by Nick Vivian and set in an English village during post-war austerity. French and Joanna Scanlan, the May sisters, look suspiciously plump and well fed, considering that food is so strictly rationed. Their secret lies in a huge freezer, which contains pies and other filling meals baked by their late mother. But the machine unobligingly goes on the blink, the repairman meets an unorthodox end and the sisters are faced with that common dilemma of macabre comedy, how to dispose of a dead body. There is even more to Vivian's ingenious script which displays not only a sharp and subversive humour but a welcome return to coherent plotting.

Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

Charming Places: From Grey to Green

Radio 4, 4.30pm

The fact that *The Sunday Format* is being transmitted on a Friday is part of the joke and the joke is on newspapers: as well, we can take a look at of course, that is the sincerest form of flattery, though nothing in the show comes and echoes of writing in *The Times*. Hopefully, this new series is described as radio's first quality weekend newspaper and will have the usual plethora of features, including *My First Shoes* and *An Air Cupboard of My Own*. Let's *The Sunday Format* rings a small bell, it appeared as a one-off two years ago and it comes from the stable that produced the brilliant *People Like Us*, in particular writer John Morton. *Rebecca* and *Simon Greenhal* are in the cast.

RADIO 1 (BBC)

6.30am Zog Ball 9.00 Mark Goodier 12.00pm Kevin Greening 2.00 Mark Radcliffe 4.00 Chris Moyles 5.45 Newsbeat 6.00 Pete Tong's Essential Selection 8.00 Judge Jules 9.00 Sports Round-Up 10.00 Radio 1 Rap Show 2.00am Fabio and Grooverider 4.00 Clive Warren

RADIO 2 (BBC)

6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 9.30 Ken Bruce 10.00 Art of Travel 12.00 Radio 2 2.00 Focus on Earth 4.00 Round-Up 6.00 Newsbeat 7.00 Breakfast 11.00 Focus on Earth 12.00pm World News 12.00 Outlook 12.45 Sports Round-Up 1.00 News 2.00 World News 2.00 Science in Action 2.30 Best on Record 3.00 World News 3.05 Football Extra 3.15 Performance 3.30 The Vintage Chat Show 4.00 World News 4.15 Insights 4.30 Art of Travel 5.00 Europe Today 5.00 News 6.15 British Today 6.30 Focus on Earth 7.00 World News 7.05 Science in Action 7.30 Your Question of Faith 7.45 Off the Shelf: Captain Corelli's Mandolin 8.00 Newsbeat 9.00 World News 9.05 World Business Report 9.20 Britain Today 9.30 Best on Record 10.00 World News 10.30 Sports Round-Up 10.30 Radio 2 11.00 Breakfast 11.30 Focus on Earth 12.00 Newsbeat 12.30 The World Today 1.30 Mandarin Books 2.00 The World Today 2.30 People and Politics 3.00 The World Today 3.20 Sports Round-Up 3.30 World Business Report 3.45 Insight 4.00 The World Today 4.30 Weekend

BBC WORLD SERVICE

5.00am The World Today 7.00 World News 7.15 Outlook 7.55 My Century 8.00 World News 8.05 Westway 9.00 Off the Shelf: Captain Corelli's Mandolin 9.35 Science in Action 9.00 World News 9.50 Art of Travel 10.00 Radio 2 11.00 Focus on Earth 12.00pm World News 12.00 Outlook 12.45 Sports Round-Up 1.00 News 2.00 World News 2.00 Science in Action 2.30 Best on Record 3.00 World News 3.05 Football Extra 3.15 Performance 3.30 The Vintage Chat Show 4.00 World News 4.15 Insights 4.30 Art of Travel 5.00 Europe Today 5.00 News 6.15 British Today 6.30 Focus on Earth 7.00 World News 7.05 Science in Action 7.45 Off the Shelf: Captain Corelli's Mandolin 8.00 Newsbeat 9.00 World News 9.05 World Business Report 9.20 Britain Today 9.30 Best on Record 10.00 World News 10.30 Sports Round-Up 10.30 Radio 2 11.00 Breakfast 11.30 Focus on Earth 12.00 Newsbeat 12.30 The World Today 1.30 Mandarin Books 2.00 The World Today 2.30 People and Politics 3.00 The World Today 3.20 Sports Round-Up 3.30 World Business Report 3.45 Insight 4.00 The World Today 4.30 Weekend

CLASSIC FM

Has BBC scriptwriting finally lost the plot?

BBC chose to launch two heart-warming ensemble-cast 50-minute series last night. There is probably some Machiavellian corporate reason for this. I suspect they may be conducting a controlled test on genetically modified drama.

The second series of *Kay Mellor's Playing The Field* clashed with ITV's faction *The Murder of Stephen Lawrence* (of which more on another occasion). The cast includes Ricky Tomlinson, the rough-and-ready Scouse bear who has appeared in some of the strongest television drama of recent years including *The Boys from the Blackstuff*, early *Brookside*, *Riff Raff* and *The Royle Family*.

I caught him on Monday in a short tribute to the director Ken Loach shown on the Film Four subscription channel. Tomlinson was celebrating Loach's originality, his vision, his unorthodox approach to casting and his burning social com-

mitment. The BBC that launched Loach's career was full of challenging new drama by challenging new writers and directors. It was part of the public service brief.

In line with Nineties American management theory, though not sadly with the BBC today, the BBC of the States was not afraid to risk failure. Kay Mellor came on Radio 4's *Front Row* on Wednesday to discuss the work of a contemporary television writer. Even the "creator" of a successful series, it seems, ends up as an artist's studio dogsboddy, colouring in outlines which have been designed, not by a master, but by a committee.

She was too diplomatic to say so, but it must be frustrating. What kind of "writing" is it when you have no control of the plot? When your cherished original idea falls into the hands of the corporate gatekeepers? It is, of course, a form of quality control, playing safe, placating the focus groups, not

rocking the ratings. It can lead to a form of "blinding down" as insidious in its way as "dumbing down" or "sewing up". Last night's new shows displayed the gamut of this system's potential from J to Q — that is from really rather dismal to really quite good.

Harbor Lights (BBC1) put that nice Nick Berry from *Heartbeat* as harbourmaster of a nice old fishing town called Brighthaven, a nice old English made-up name in the tradition of Melchester in *Roy of the Rovers*.

The title sequence, a flashback to the death of Berry's best friend during a tempestuous diving accident, suggested that tragedy could be on the menu. But this was quickly dispelled when we discovered that Brighthaven is, for some unexplained reason, inhabited almost entirely by loveable Cockneys.

Otherwise this was Englandland, that comforting recreation of

an old-fashioned vision of our past. Even the black cafe owner, Elvis, sounded as if he was about to burst into a cheery calypso at any moment. We began with a Cook's tour of the characters, all of whom turned out to be rather dull, spoke wooden dialogue, and lived in dull homes.

Then the empty yacht of the local fertiliser salesman drifted past the harbour. A tragic

REVIEW

Paul Hoggart

mystery, perhaps, like the *Mary Celeste* or the madness of Donald Crowhurst. My theory was that he had jumped overboard rather than return to that boring town.

In the event this proved to be one of those light-hearted stories about a lovable bigamist with a heart of gold, running away from his responsibilities. When he returned everyone decided that they loved him the way he was, although he did have to give up his girlfriend, as the wives wouldn't put up with a bit on the side.

Call me old-fashioned, but I think he should have been jailed for wearing an offensive pullover. I suspect this was the BBC's GM controlled test and has an added interest-repellent gene. Doubtless it will prove compulsive viewing for some, much in the way some people get addicted to plastic pots containing hydrogenated pasta snacks.

Playing the Field (BBC1) is set

in the South Yorkshire town of Castlefield, just up the M1 from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Apart from the name, it has little in common with *Harbour Lights*, however. Two of the cast, John Thomson and James Nesbitt, starred in *Cold Feet*. The two shows share many virtues.

ICold Feet was a sitcom that shaded off into a straight drama. *Playing the Field* is a straight drama teetering on the edge of sitcom. As with *Cold Feet* the humour is understated and deftly applied. The editing and direction are fast and witty, the dialogue sharp, lively and convincing. Above all, the characters are engaging, funny, sympathetic, alive.

I missed the first series, and had to work quite hard sorting out who was who among the women's football club and their male appendages. Some of the women, it would seem, have also had this

problem. At Rita's 40th birthday bash, the husbands did the by-now obligatory *Full Monty* turn, but last night's opener shared that film's wistful but poignant humanity. Perhaps this was because it was written by Kay Mellor herself. I hope the other writers have coloured in the outlines brightly.

Fred Dibnah's *Industrial Age* (BBC2) wallows in a different aspect of nostalgia, but unlike *Harbour Lights* it is based on something real. Dibnah is famous for demolishing factory chimneys, but his real love is restoring old machinery and he has become a national expert on the contraptions that once made Britain great.

He is a bit of a professional character, but I can forgive him anything for that Lancashire accent, where machines are "the wucka-wurse of Industrial Revolution" and you can "demonstrate" how the "woal building jurned" before "the works closed."

**6.00am Business Breakfast (7033)
7.00 Breakfast News (48838)
9.00 Kilroy (7887093)
9.45 The Vanessa Show (T) (4120068)
10.55 News; Weather (T) (6358432)
11.00 Change That (6375109)
11.25 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (T) (6272068)
11.55 News; Weather (T) (1455155)
12.00pm Call My Bluff (19277)
12.30 Wipeout (5652377)
12.55 The Weather Show (T) (48091819)
1.00 One O'Clock News (T) (5797)
1.30 Regional News; Weather (47713867)
1.40 Neighbours: Jim's triathlon hopes come under threat (T) (2532942)
2.05 Hitman: A hit man plans to sabotage Ed's spine operation (T) (3749703)
2.55 Body Splash (5925939)
3.25 Children's BBC: Playdays (6916722)
3.45 Spider (2713426) 3.50 Smart on the Road (378426) 4.05 Rugsrats (609822)
4.30 L & K (F) (789616) 4.45 Newsround Extra (1212161) 5.15 Blue Peter (6707797)
5.35 Neighbours (T) (142906)
6.00 Six O'Clock News; Weather (T) (884)
6.30 Regional News Magazine (364)
7.00 Snapshots: Profile of the teenage chart sensation Billa (T) (6971)
7.30 Top of the Pops includes performances by Lenny Kravitz, Blondie, Bananarama, The Muppets, Next of Kin, UNKLE, featuring Ian Brown and Sister Sway (T) (548)
8.00 Ground Force: The team renovate a small Alba garden (2/8) (T) (5819)
8.30 Birds of a Feather: Doreen shares her tips for a happy marriage (T) (1426)
9.00 Nine O'Clock News; Regional News; Weather (T) (5890) :**



Oprah Winfrey talks about her latest Hollywood film role (9.30pm) :

8.30 Parkinson: Oprah Winfrey talks exclusively about the making of her new film *Beloved* (T) (828074)
10.25 The Star Chamber (1983) Michael Douglas stars as a judge who joins a secret society devoted to taking revenge on criminals beyond the reach of the law. Directed by Peter Hyams (T) (58909)
12.05pm The Big End (T) (7628117)
12.35 There Are No Children Here (1993) Drama, starring Oprah Winfrey as a proud single mother struggling to protect her two sons from criminal elements. Anita W. Addison directs (T) (2449778)
2.00 Weather (3685089)
2.05 BBC News 24 (5459001) :

1.05 Just Up Your Street (1/8) (331259)
1.15 FILM: The Star Chamber (T) (5352920)
1.40pm The Big End (T) (7615757) 1.15 FILM: There Are No Children Here (T) (3681001) 2.35 News Headlines (T) (4012778)
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SWIMMING 46

Hickman lays careful plans to ensure that he stays on top

SPORT

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 19 1999

RUGBY UNION 48

Peters has the drive to give Scotland heart at Twickenham



Caretaker manager sweeps into office with pledge to make best of short-term job

Keegan rallies to England cause

BY OLIVER HOLT
FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

THE agony of the short-term, part-time arrangement that the Football Association has come to with the new England caretaker manager became apparent yesterday when anyone who might have forgotten was reminded of just how inspirational the man can be. Four months of exposure to his character, to his spirit, will merely make the leaving of Kevin Keegan the harder for everyone when he returns to the open arms of Fulham in June, and expose England and their supporters to the misery of paradise lost.

Keegan was good yesterday. In fact, he was brilliant. At his first press conference as the man in charge of the national team, he was so persuasive, so eloquent, so full of energy and exuberance for the task of leading England into their next four matches that he all but left his audience in a swoon.

Rivals draw clear.....49
Tribute to O'Neill.....49

After the ham-fistedness of Glenn Hoddle, Keegan made almost hypnotic listening. His dynamism spread across the room at a London hotel, infusing everyone who was there with new optimism about England's chances of qualifying for the 2000 European championship finals in Holland and Belgium. He gave a beguiling vision of his England: an England in which every player would be encouraged to roar the national anthem, an England that would attack at every opportunity, an England with Alan Shearer retained as captain, a re-creation of the brief alliance that they forged in Newcastle.

It would be an England, too, in which the critical comments of players such as Frank Leboeuf, who suggest that England have little but bulldog spirit in their armoury, would be pinned to the Wembley dressing-room wall. "I want to ram that sort of stuff down the



Flanked by Davies, left, and Wilkinson, Keegan prepares to address the media yesterday on his plans for England during his four matches in charge. Photograph: Gill Allen

throats of the people who said it," Keegan said.

For a man acclaimed as the sport's Messiah, he even talked of raising a national hero from the footballing dead when he hinted that he would recall Paul Gascoigne to the England team that will face Poland in Keegan's first and most crucial match in charge, the qualifying tie against Poland at Wembley on March 27.

"I am a fan of Paul," he said. "I think I stand in the same position as every other Englishman in the country with him. I see a tremendous talent with something to offer, someone who will be in my mind — only in my mind at the moment — when I pick the squad to play Poland. It is up to the players to show me what they can do and that includes Paul. The onus is on him."

Keegan was sympathetic,

not combative. He said that he understood all the doubts and concerns about his part-time status. His aim, he said, was to leave his successor in such a strong position that he would be inheriting a dream job.

It was all wonderful, mouth-watering stuff, the kind of stirring, motivational pep-talk that not even Terry Venables could match. But the longer he talked, the more obvious the essential contradictions in his

position became, the more painful the realisation of his transitory status grew.

The man sitting on the dais in the York Room in the basement of the Metropole Hotel on the Edgware Road is, as the FA has rightly identified, the best man for the job. Yet he is also the man who will depart after three competitive games and who will leave a poisoned chalice for whoever follows him, especially if he wins all

his European championship qualifying ties, against Poland, Sweden and Bulgaria.

Even three victories would not assure England of qualifying for the finals and Keegan's successor would then be faced with two tricky matches in September to finish the job. The nation, meanwhile, would quite understandably be grieving for the man that got away.

Keegan proved even with his words and his thoughts yes-

terday that, his commitments to Fulham notwithstanding, he is eminently equipped to lift the team out of the trough that it has sunk into. That has never been in question. The irony is that for all its preaching, the FA has sacrificed the long term for the short term in the most iniquitous way.

There were elements, for instance, of Keegan and his audience talking at the most basic of cross purposes, of the new

England manager forgetting that everyone desperately wants him to succeed and that desperation will create a belief in him that he has guaranteed he will shatter.

"I have come into this with my eyes wide open," Keegan said. "I know I have got the chance to make the doubters believe again. I have done it before a few times in my life and I hope I will do it a few times more before they put me six feet under."

In that case, at least, Keegan singularly failed to understand that no one is doubting him, that there is no question of anyone having to prove anyone wrong. We all know he has got what it takes to succeed — and that is the problem. He said again that it was his loyalty to Fulham that was preventing from taking a job that he would have "jumped at" in other circumstances. It was just that the time was not right.

"Please don't say that I am demeaning the England job," he said. "because I am not. I don't think loyalty to Fulham is a weakness. I want to go back there and finish the job. No one is trying to pull the wool over your eyes. This is a compromise, but sometimes this kind of arrangement gives you the freedom to do things that you could not do in other situations.

"I see advantages in all of this and it will give the FA a bit of breathing space. I am already thinking about picking my first squad and walking up the tunnel, for that match against Poland. I hope that if I do the job well, maybe it will come around again."

David Davies, the FA's executive director, sat alongside him and rationalised the arrangement by saying that the FA would have a "significantly wider choice of candidates" at the end of the season. By then, though, their first choice was already turning his mind to other matters. "My team for Notts County on Saturday is..." he said with a smile. He never reached the end of the sentence.

TOMORROW — THE BEST COLUMNISTS

- Michael Lynagh on English prospects for the Five Nations Championship
- Football Saturday with Gary Neville, Lynne Truss and Oliver Holt

Wilkinson handed pivotal role in hunt for new king

By MATT DICKINSON

day job of technical director and his principle task will be the installation of Keegan's successor. It makes him an influential man. That much was apparent in Wilkinson's appearance alongside Keegan on the dais yesterday.

If he cannot be England coach — and there is little doubt that he wanted it — Wilkinson has the next best thing. He is the man who will nominate the England coach.

He will also be a significant part of Keegan's backroom team, with his flight already booked to Armenia to watch Poland play before England's critical European championship qualifier on March 27.

Appropriately enough, it is the son of a coalminer who will put on the torch and helmet to lead the FA's search party. Howard Wilkinson, a little frazzled after his week under the spotlights as caretaker coach, returns to his

right direction. "Kevin and I have a lot in common," Wilkinson said. "Both our fathers were miners and where we have got is characterised by hard work. Kevin will select the squad, pick the team, choose how they play. Everything outside that, where possible, will be provided by myself and the organisation that backs me."

It is as if the kingmaker, though, that Wilkinson will be forging his most important job yet at the FA, filling the role that Jimmy Armfield had when he canvassed football's great and good before successfully nominating Terry Venables as England coach. Now it is Wilkinson who will be at training grounds making discrete inquiries to take over the FA's international sub-committee.

It is a safe bet that he will be talking to Alex Ferguson to see whether a Manchester United triumph in the European Cup will make him ready to take on the England job. He will take the opportunity to ask Ferguson about Brian Kidd's credentials for the post. And he will almost certainly journey up to Blackburn Rovers to ask Kidd himself whether he is ready, just as he will sound out the likes of Bryan Robson, David Platt and Roy Hodgson.

The FA are confident that the search will become easier rather than harder as managers reach the end of the season and Wilkinson is confident that mistakes will not be repeated. "We will do as much as possible to avoid this situation happening again," he said. "I will not be on my bice here, there and everywhere, but we will make sure we have a reasonable idea who has the ability and who wants to do the job. Hopefully, we will also have made changes so that more people want it."

Keegan included, perhaps. Adamant as he was yesterday that he would return to Fulham full-time in the summer, four days is a long time in football. And he has four months to change his mind.

PRIZE-WINNING

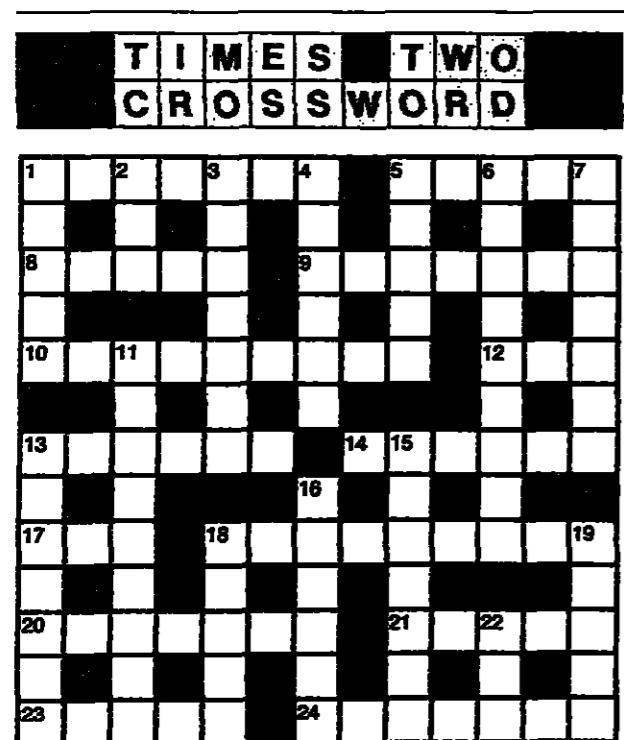
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No 1645

ACROSS
1 Groom's helper (4)
5 Edible part of animal (5)
8 Spirit Prospero released (5)
9 Mild rease (3-4)
10 Multi-bed room (9)
12 Geol. period (3)
13 Castle wall: type of bridge (6)
14 A reptile: Bill, in Alice (6)
17 Small (Scots) (3)
18 Thrown extrapolated (9)
20 Tread roughly underfoot (7)
21 Decorate (5)
23 Useful: dexterous (5)
24 Conference city, 1945 (7)

SOLUTION TO NO 1644
ACROSS: 1 Fulmar 5 Stoned 8 Moor 9 Syllable
10 Sprain 12 Gibe 15 Assassination 16 Idle 17 Linger
19 Cheques 21 Flap 22 Ogres 23 Manage
DOWN: 2 Unopped 3 Mar 4 Rashness 5 Sell
6 Orang-utan 7 Eel 11 Arabesque 13 Boomerang
14 Uncle Sam 18 Less 20 Hug 21 Fin

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THE NAMES IN THE FRAME FOR THE HOT SEAT



■ **BRYAN ROBSON:** Combined his managerial duties at Middlesbrough with a coaching position under Venables, but despite hinting that he would like the job, he has, at least temporarily, ruled himself out. Recently signed a new five-year contract and appears to have enough troubles on Teesside.

■ **JOHN GREGORY:** A sharp learning curve since leaving Wycombe Wanderers 12 months ago. He has had to deal with disparate personalities, such as Savo Milosevic, Stan Collymore and Doug Ellis. Villa's recent slump and a tendency to speak as he finds would count against him.

■ **BRIAN KIDD:** Nicknamed "The Legend" at Old Trafford, Kidd can boast an impressive CV that includes two England caps as well as playing and coaching for Manchester United.

Blackburn have lost only once since he replaced Hodgson, but has still to establish a public profile.

GEORGE CAULKIN

■ **KEVIN KEEGAN:** Fulham once advertised for "a manager/genius," and Lancaster Gate will know the feeling. Those who know him best all suggest that he will stick to his guns. Come June, he will walk.

■ **ROY HODGSON:** Once regarded as a shoe-in to replace Glenn Hoddle, but Hodgson's reputation has been tarnished thanks to the unhappy end to his spell with Blackburn Rovers. He has managed Switzerland and Internazionale and is seeking employment.

■ **BOBBY ROBSON:** Said "not goodbye, but farewell", when leaving the England job in 1990. History has been kind to his eight-year tenure, which encompassed a World Cup semi-final. Is due to leave PSV Eindhoven this summer, but why would he want it?

■ **HOWARD WILKINSON:** Not the most glorious of caretakers, even if France hardly provided the most benevolent opposition. After being snubbed for Keegan, his desire to replace him must have been dashed. Crucially, his philosophy